

INTRODUCTION

Let's have a conversation—and maybe a *different* conversation—about happiness. That's what I'm up to here. The fact that you've even picked up this book, given its title, to me is a hopeful indication that we're both interested in at least exploring this topic a bit! The notion of *exploring* is a perfect way of describing what I believe to be the best way to move through this book. Not the physical type of exploring, like pioneers crossing the plains, but exploring in a different sense. Exploring in the sense of setting out on a path, not knowing exactly where you're going to end up, and being willing to at least start the journey anyway. Exploring as moving into and through some uncharted territory, and opening yourself up to learning about it. And exploring as being willing to temporarily suspend what you know about something, because you're aware that doing so is a pre-requisite for being truly open to new (and presently invisible) possibilities and opportunities. In these sorts of ways, my invitation to you is to come exploring with me. I believe explorers of all types take risks, though of very different sorts. And explorers of all types make discoveries, sometimes entirely different than those which were anticipated. *One of my goals in this book is to be able to show you how the discoveries you will make on this journey are absolutely worth the risk-taking that's required to get there.* So let's start out broadly, with a bit of a historical perspective on this topic. This can serve to set the stage for our conversation, for what I want to share with you, and for what I hope will lead to some of those unanticipated discoveries.

From the U.S. Declaration of Independence we read: *"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."*¹

Many years ago, the philosopher Aristotle pointed to what he saw as the universal nature of this pursuit when he said: *"Happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence."*²

Another philosopher, William James, suggested much the same when he said: *"How to gain, how to keep, and how to recover happiness is, in fact—for most men, at all times—the secret motive for all they do, and for all they are willing to endure."*³

And the Dalai Lama, in his 1999 book *Ethics for the New Millennium*, offers his perspective which, to me, is also a solid place from which to begin. He says: *“For my part, meeting innumerable others from all over the world and from every walk of life reminds me of our basic sameness as human beings. Indeed, the more I see of the world, the clearer it becomes that no matter what our situation, whether we are rich or poor, educated or not, of one race, gender, religion or another, we all desire to be happy and to avoid suffering. Our every intended action, in a sense our whole life—how we choose to live it within the context of the limitations imposed by our circumstances—can be seen as our answer to the great question which confronts us all: ‘How am I to be happy?’”*⁴

Clearly, this is a big issue for a great many of us... and apparently has been for quite a long time. People today continue to search for answers to this question in an incredible variety of ways. In this book I share with you a way of understanding that brings truly unique and unprecedented possibilities to this equation. It is at once broad enough to touch and include virtually every other approach out there, and yet has roots deep enough to serve as a solid platform for each of us to use at home and at work, everywhere we go and in everything we do for the rest of our lives. This I know: it changed mine. And I believe it can change yours, too.

This book is built entirely around the following 2 major claims:

- 1. A new understanding of language provides a new foundation, a new starting point, a new set of options and a new set of tools for those of us seeking to design more happiness and fulfillment into our lives.**
- 2. This new way of understanding language is directly connected to a new way of understanding ourselves, a new way of understanding human beings... and it is here that things get really interesting!**

The approach I will share with you may in some ways seem counter-intuitive, going against the grain of what you may have grown up believing and thinking about yourself and how you end up producing the results you produce in your life. And in other ways, I believe, it will resonate with you as a different type of “common sense,” as it points to things you have known all along but somehow may not have been using in your everyday life. In any event, I promise that this can allow you to *see*

a great many things differently and *do* a great many things differently, *at a level at which seeing and doing things differently matters a great deal.*

In this book, I will share with you a different and powerful way of thinking and observing. I will show you how a new way of understanding *language* unlocks a new way of understanding yourself, your relationships, your effectiveness and your results—in a *tremendously wide variety of areas*. I will show you ways in which your language is directly connected to your ability to design your own life and manage your own moods. And at many places along the way, I will invite you to speculate with me, to consider “what if...” questions for yourself and to “try on” a different set of glasses through which to look at yourself, your relationships, your moods and your life. After all, that’s what this type of exploring’s all about.

* * *

For our purposes, let’s define happiness in a simple way. Moving forward, when we say happiness, we’ll be talking about one or both of the following:

- Peacefulness
- Productivity.

(I also like Ingrid Bergman’s definition of happiness. She says: “*Happiness = good health and a bad memory!*”)

Within these pages, we’ll say that achieving Happiness = achieving some balanced combination of Peacefulness and Productivity.

Peacefulness includes the *qualitative* side, the subjective nature of your experience as you do what you do. It includes your emotional space, the degree to which you experience (or don’t experience!) suffering or dissatisfaction in an ongoing way. And productivity includes the *quantitative* side, the objective getting-things-done side, the making-a-contribution, real-world, tangible results side. Happiness, as used within these pages, involves *both*. What I’ll be sharing with you on the following pages is directly applicable to *both* your ability to achieve peacefulness, as well

as to your ability to be productive, in all areas of your life. The goal for a great many of us is to create a *balance that works*—and this we will call happiness.

The claim of this book is that a *new understanding of language* provides an incredibly powerful foundation from which to achieve this balance. This new approach is directly and immediately valuable in three primary areas:

- Our personal lives—for us as individuals
- Our relationships—personal and professional; and
- Our effectiveness in any leadership roles that we assume in our lives.

It's my goal to have you *see new possibilities* for yourself, as you go through the following pages, within each of these three areas. This is where it all starts—because seeing new possibilities is always the first step toward producing new results.



Let's start with what we see around us. In America and the industrialized West, large numbers of people have achieved and acquired a great deal—nice, comfortable homes, central air and heat, enough food to eat, adequate clothing, a reduction in some physical ailments and diseases, education, careers, activities, country club memberships, material and social “success”—and yet somehow, many of us report that we're not happy, not fulfilled, not producing certain important results we want to be producing. What's going on?

We may have had, when we were younger, a mental picture of what we thought it would take to make us satisfied, peaceful, productive, happy. And now, when we've actually achieved and acquired these things, we find something missing and we say we're not happy. This situation is widespread in our society today—have you noticed? Do you find yourself here from time to time? Many of us have. Today there are literally millions of people “living the good life” reporting that they are extremely “stressed out” and “overwhelmed,” and that they have been this way for quite awhile now. What's going on here? *And more importantly: Is there a way that we may design our lives so that they include real balance, satisfaction, peace, effectiveness... that is, happiness?*

The Dalai Lama and many others who have traveled extensively have come to a similar, and perhaps surprising, view: Those of us living in the

materially developed countries, for all our industry and new technology, are in some ways *less* satisfied, *less* happy and to some degree suffer *more* than those living in less materially developed countries. One look at the demand for Zoloft, Prozac and other anti-depressants in the U.S. certainly supports this. How do we explain this? And more importantly, *what actions might we take*, should we choose to take active steps in bringing more happiness, less suffering, greater peace, a healthier balance and better results to our lives? Ultimately, that is what this book is all about—sharing with you a ***new place to look*** in our search for what we're calling happiness.

I have heard the following story used to illustrate this situation: Late at night, an inebriated man was seen on his hands and knees, under a lamppost, crawling about. Another guy approached him and asked him what he was doing, whereupon he replied “*Searching for my keys.*” “Where did you lose them?” asked the passer-by. “*Oh, over there, out in the street.*” “Well then, why are you looking for them here?” “*Because the light's better here!*”

The approach that I will share with you has been “out of the light” in this sense: Since I've been involved in this work I have not heard one single person report that he or she learned this—or something very like it using different terms—in a traditional primary school or college environment. What's within these pages is also not something that's readily available for us to pick up in our normal course of living, working and doing what we do. In my experience, this way of seeing things is definitely not part of the mainstream curriculum. That being said, however, I do believe that growing numbers of people (myself among them) have come to points in our lives where we're more willing to look a little deeper and question some previously unquestioned assumptions about ourselves. For whatever reasons, we're now more willing to question some previously taken-for-granted “facts” about who we are, how we got this way, and *our own roles* in bringing about the experiences and situations we seem to find ourselves in. This book is absolutely about just this sort of questioning and re-thinking.

I have come to believe that one of the main reasons that many of us have not been finding the experience of happiness is this: *we've been looking in the wrong places!* It's not that we haven't been looking hard enough; we've simply been going down avenues that, in the end, have not produced the sustainable change or the lasting results we're looking for.

In many ways, we've been looking *through* language and taking it for granted as do what we do, living our lives. Here, we'll be looking *at* language instead. And this, to put things simply, changes everything.

This is not a book of tips and techniques and it is not a how-to manual, although I promise—and I know this is a big promise—that you will absolutely be able to do things you are not currently able to do as a result of practicing what you learn here. And one more big promise I make to you: That what is within these pages can support you in more effectively and successfully using *ANY and ALL self-improvement, relationship-improvement and leadership-improvement* approaches on the market! I say this because what I will share with you is a level “underneath” all of those, and by shifting our perspective here we suddenly make visible entirely new sets of possibilities for use within any and all frameworks. We suddenly make visible entirely new sets of options, new sets of choices, and we also gain a new understanding of *why* one approach or another actually works.

As the book title implies, my focus is on *language*—specifically, *human language*—and my intent is to share with you the incredible possibilities for us that become available by taking a new look here. We won't spend any time on subjects and verbs, nouns and pronouns, grammar and sentence structure; instead, our journey will take us in an entirely different direction. But here's the kicker, and this is key: when we start taking a new look at language in this way, it quickly becomes apparent that what we're also doing is taking a new look at *ourselves*, a new look at *human beings*. And this, to me, is where things get exciting. Said another way, what's within these pages will absolutely enable you to be *more effective* in virtually every aspect of your life... but if we limit our attention to *effectiveness*, we'll truly miss the larger point. We'll miss the whole shift in perspective, the more important *change in how we're defining and understanding ourselves to be* that makes the effectiveness possible in the first place!

I am honored to be able to share with you what I have had the privilege of learning and teaching over these past years. For me, this place to look was so close, so obvious that I didn't see it at first. But once I saw it, something shifted and I could never go back to the way I saw things before. Perhaps it will be this way for you, also.

It's with great gratitude that I have undertaken this project. First, gratitude to my wife Betsy for introducing me to this learning years ago and

gratitude that we get to do this together. And gratitude that many of our seminar participants were also interested enough in this learning to continue to ask the question, “*Where can I get a book about this stuff?*” Also, I am so grateful for the many wonderful people who have been my teachers, coaches and friends along this path, sharing with me ways of understanding that truly shifted my world.

My goal is to share a body of learning that, for me and many others, has proven to be profoundly powerful, positive and important in our personal and professional lives. Does this mean I never have a “bad day?” Does this mean I never get unhappy, or that it’s somehow wrong to ever be unhappy? Does this mean I believe there’s never a time to be angry or sad? Of course not. What it does mean is that I am far more conscious about my role in creating my experience and about tools available to me to design something different, should I so choose.

Would you be interested in learning more about your own role in creating your experience? Or about acquiring a proven set of tools for directly intervening upon and shifting out of “negative” moods? How about a stronger ability to establish and maintain healthy, mutually beneficial relationships? Could you benefit from a clear, concise road map—steps to take—in order to get things done more effectively and produce new results, at home and at work? Would a powerful new way of understanding and bringing forth effective leadership (any level) be valuable to you? Are you interested in strengthening your ability to move through setbacks, problems and disappointments? Or to more fully realize and take advantage of opportunities? Would a stronger ability to create balance in your life be valuable to you? How about being better equipped to deal successfully with change? Or to improve your ability to learn—throughout your entire lifetime?

Are you interested in learning how to dramatically influence, in a number of positive ways, the “quality of your journey,” wherever your journey takes you?

If you are, you’ve found the right book. I promise that what I’m sharing with you, within these pages, can serve as a new foundation, a new “starting point,” and a new set of tools for all this and more. *Read on!* It is my direct experience that this way of understanding has great value at the levels of personal well-being, relationship-building of all types, effective

leadership, organizational success and community building. More and more, though, I have begun to see even bigger possibilities. It is now my wholehearted belief that these ideas and ways of seeing things may also represent one set of tools that can directly serve us as we—all of us—attempt to live together on this planet in the years ahead. It's a privilege to share this with you.

Chalmers Brothers

Naples, Florida

April, 2003