

## **From Depression to Happiness in 7 Simple Steps**

By Dr. Timothy Sharp

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## Introduction



Many people over the years have claimed to have found **the secrets to happiness**. Not many of them have had any sort of formal training in the understanding of human thinking and behaviour. Yet many of these have made lots of money selling products and services which have not always proven to be of great benefit.

Before founding The Happiness Institute I spent approximately **15 years studying psychology and completing three degrees**. I've written several books and numerous academic papers. I've treated over 1,000 individuals with common problems such as depression, anxiety, stress, insomnia and all sorts of chronic, sometimes terminal, health problems. I've also worked with numerous organisations helping them maximise the productivity of, and manage staff.

I can honestly say that I know what makes people distressed but just as importantly, I've also learned what makes people happy.

Not many others have had the education, training and experience that I have and I'm proud to say that I'm now at the forefront of the exciting, new "positive psychology" movement.

## Step 1

*“Learn why you’re unhappy or depressed to begin with.”*

You can’t change or “fix” something if you don’t know why it’s broken.

Different people become depressed for different reasons. Accordingly, the solutions for depression vary for different people.

Spend time first, therefore, learning why you became depressed and why you’ve continued to experience low moods up until now.

## **Quick Tip**

Find some good, sensible information about the causes of depression and select the parts that are most relevant to you.

**Step 2**

*“Don’t be afraid to get help if you can’t do it on your own.”*

We all need help sometimes. This doesn’t mean we’ve failed, or that we’re hopeless. It simply means we’re human and we can’t be experts in everything.

Just like many people seek help (from family, friends or professionals) when they’re learning to drive or when they’re doing their tax, so too do many people need to seek help to overcome depression & other psychological or health problems.

## **Quick Tip**

If you have a good friend, or a close family member whom you can trust and whose opinion you respect then talk to them about overcoming your depression.

Alternatively, or even at the same time, don't be afraid to seek professional help (from someone like a psychologist).



### Step 3

*“Do something – take positive action now.”*

Doing something constructive, anything, is almost always better than doing nothing.

Don't worry too much if you don't think you know all the answers. Much of overcoming depression is trial-and-error anyway.

For many people just getting started is the hardest thing to do but it's also, frequently, the most effective.

## **Quick Tip**

Do some research (on the internet or by reading one of the many good self-help books in this field) and choose at least one recommended strategy that makes sense to you.

Now make sure that you believe doing this is achievable and if you do, make a plan to do it today or tomorrow.

## Step 4

*“Eliminate negative thoughts and develop more positive ones.”*

Negative thoughts are the fuel for depression and the enemy of happiness.

To overcome depression and start moving towards happiness it's essential you learn how to control your thinking.

Although this might seem daunting to begin with it is definitely possible. It is, after all, a skill and like any other skill it's something you'll get better at with practice.

## **Quick Tip**

Learn first to identify your thinking. Then understand that thoughts are not facts. As such, learn to challenge unhelpful thoughts and replace them with more helpful ones.

## Step 5

*“Get rid of bad, self-defeating habits.”*

At the end of the day, we are what we do.

Actions speak louder than words and ultimately it is our behaviours that define us (our personalities and our moods).

Depression, then, is frequently associated with “bad habits” and “self-defeating behaviours”. Identify these as soon as possible and then make sure you do all you can to eliminate them.

## **Quick Tip**

Examine what you do when, and/or just prior to feeling depressed.

Assess these situations and the associated behaviours, and explore whether or not there are ways to stop engaging in such actions or alternatively, somehow modify the way you go about things.

## Step 6

*“Develop a more healthy and happy lifestyle.”*

Those who claim to have no time to care for their health will sooner or later have to find time to take care of their illness!

It’s hard to be happy if you’re literally sick and tired all the time.

So keep active and exercise regularly (this alone is one of the most effective ways to boost your mood), eat well and ensure you get adequate sleep and rest.

## **Quick Tip**

Find a way to increase your activity (you don't necessarily need to go to the gym or spend lots of money – it might be something as simple as going for a short walk each day).

Eat more fruit and vegetables (and eat less processed and fast foods).

Make sure you get enough sleep and if possible, take up meditation or applied relaxation.



## Step 7

*“Practice, practice and practice more until you’re great at being happy!”*

Everything that’s now easy was difficult once. Moving from depression to happiness can seem difficult for some but it will become easier if you practice (and then practice more).

Achieving happiness requires nothing more than practicing a few simple disciplines every day.

So work out what you need to do and do it. And don’t allow other things to distract you - stay focused.

### **Quick Tip**

Start simple and start slow. Just do a few minutes of something (constructive and positive) every

day; and then build on it as you gain confidence and start to feel better.

## Conclusion

Depression is a common problem, one that many of us will experience at some stage in our lives. At the same time, however, it is a problem that can be overcome. There's no reason why you should put up with depression or even settle for "okayness". Happiness is achievable if you know what to do and then do it.

### *Find Out More ...*

All of the ideas you've just read are described in more detail in my book, [The Happiness Handbook](#), and in my specially designed [happiness workbooks](#). They are also integral to our [coaching and courses](#), including our exciting new 90 day online happiness program.

These products are all available on our website so if you're interested in finding out more just click here: [www.thehappinessinstitute.com/products](http://www.thehappinessinstitute.com/products).

You can also read more about our coaching and courses (including our online options) at [www.thehappinessinstitute.com/events](http://www.thehappinessinstitute.com/events).

And finally, you can sign up for our eNewsletter on our home page at [www.thehappinessinstitute.com](http://www.thehappinessinstitute.com). It's free and full of great ideas (such as tips and quotes, book reviews and the latest research) to help you live a happier life.

## More about ...

# THE HAPPINESS INSTITÜTE

The Happiness Institute was established in 2003 with the specific intention of making individuals, couples, families and organisations happier.

Based on my years of experience I've developed a range of services and products specifically designed to address the issues described above. You can find out more about our coaching services at [www.thehappinessinstitute.com/events](http://www.thehappinessinstitute.com/events) but the most relevant solution to the aforementioned issues are our unique and specially designed happiness workbooks.

These address themes such as clarifying your life goals, optimistic thinking, identifying and utilising your strengths and building happy relationships.

And we know they work. Here are some comments clients and participants have made:

*“They have really honed in on the essential elements required for finding one’s happiness and the programs provide practical and effective advice on how to apply these elements...I’ve always come away from the sessions feeling very positive...One hour sessions that provide a lifetime of value.”*

So if you’d like our help to learn the CHOOSE strategies and live a happier life, visit our website at [www.thehappinessinstitute.com](http://www.thehappinessinstitute.com) and view our “products” section.

You can also contact one of our expert team at:

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## **Can we help you?**

Here are some of the things that people say about our products & services:

“They (the workbooks) are fantastic. A really excellent resource. I want to send them to umpteen friends and family. Congrats on a great format, concept and writing style. They are just the right size and level of information; authoritative yet digestible. You’ve really created something worthwhile and effective.” (Sophie, 2005)

“The course was really well organised and included excellent materials to take home and do more work on. It was run by the best facilitators...really helpful and supportive.” (Wendy Smith, 2005)