

The Overwhelmed Brain
Self-Discovery Series Presents

Clear The Path To Happiness

*Powerful, Practical Steps To Become
Happier, Feel Better, And Enjoy Living*

By Paul Colaianni

Host of *The Overwhelmed Brain*
Personal Growth Show

Praise For The Overwhelmed Brain Podcast

“I’m a faithful listener and feel as if you’re sitting on the couch with me sharing your inner thoughts... You make a difference in lives. In my case, your show causes me to pause, reflect and sometimes have a paradigm shift in one or another aspect of my life”

-Lynn

“I find your podcast a treasure trove of information on living an emotionally healthy life and look forward to each new one”

-Grace

“I wanted to say thank you for your podcast... I find almost everything I hear from you so incredibly profound, meaningful, insightful, useful and immediately applicable in some capacity”

-Caroline

“Thanks for all you do. Almost everything you say strikes a chord with me somehow... I am finding some startling and moving revelations about things I’ve never addressed within myself. Hope that you keep up the great work and help so many other people find their path to happiness.”

-Brian

“His voice is steady and calming, and his insights are easy to understand, and rock solid. Thank you Paul”

-Dr. Pei

Endodontist, Yoga Instructor, Certified Life Coach

“I love the tips and strategies Paul shares. It helps to jumpstart my day, and I’m making it one of my morning rituals. Must listen! You should! I highly recommend it!”

-Marie

Today’s Leading Women

The author assumes no responsibility for any errors or omissions in this book. The author specifically disclaims any liability resulting from the use or application of the information contained in this book, and the information is not intended to serve as medical, psychological, legal, financial or other professional advice related to individual situations.

Published by Paul Colaianni
Atlanta, Georgia
<http://theoverwhelmedbrain.com>

Copyright ©2014 The Overwhelmed Brain

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission from the copyright holder.

Created in the United States of America

1st Edition

Enjoy other book(s) and worksheets by this author:

[How to Deal with Irrational People: What to do When Common Sense Fails and “Crazy” Behavior Prevails](#)

[Values Workbook: Discover what’s most important in all aspects of your life so that you can stop self-sabotage!](#)

[Anxiety Buster Workbook: Ending the worry and anxiety about unresolved problems](#)

How to use this book

Anytime a word or phrase is underlined, you can tap or click on the word(s), and you'll be taken to a webpage. For example, my website can be found at <http://theoverwhelmedbrain.com>.

This Book contains supplemental content to the episodes of the personal growth podcast, [The Overwhelmed Brain](#) and is updated and revised to contain the latest information and author additions.

Table of Contents

How to use this book	
Is This Book For You?	
Happiness Really Doesn't Exist	
Why I Say "Happiness" Doesn't Exist	
Do You Really Know <i>How</i> To Be Happy?	
Why Can't You Just Be Happy?	
Clearing the Mental Roadblocks to Happiness	
The Worst Job I've Ever Had	
The Plague of the Mind	
Clearing the Path to Happiness	
The Hazards of Denial	
The Threshold of Emotional Pain	
The Momentum of Acceptance	
No Lingering Allowed!	
Pull the Emotional Bucket Up From the Well	
Summary	
What My Worst Job Taught Me	
Final Thoughts	
The Overwhelmed Brain	
I Appreciate You	
Contact Me	
About The Overwhelmed Brain	
About The Author	
Thank You	

Is This Book For You?

Are you annoyed with affirmations? Are you tired of being told to “think positively”?

I know I am. After about 15 years in personal growth, both as a student and as a teacher, I’ve realized that affirmations and positive thinking are simply *not* the path to happiness and well-being. Though, I do believe that after you’ve eliminated most of the negativity from your life, affirmations *can* be an effective habit.

But, positive thinking? Well, let’s put it this way, if you need to tell yourself to ‘*think positively*’, you’re probably suppressing thoughts and repressing emotions.

Pushing emotions down is like trying to stuff an overloaded suitcase. It gets heavier over time, and eventually bursts open at the most inappropriate moment.

Positive thinking will happen naturally *after* you’ve worked through and released deep-rooted negative emotions.

Happiness flows naturally when you’ve resolved all of your unexpressed emotional pain. When you’re happy, positive thinking happens on its own.

The question then becomes: “How do I become happy?”

If you’re *already* happy and have no negative, lingering thoughts sneaking up on you, then you probably don’t need this book. If however, you resonate with the above question, then keep reading!

The Overwhelmed Brain Self-Help Series is an ongoing series of books designed to help you get through the more challenging emotional issues in life. I believe that happiness reveals itself when we are finally able to live from our core being – who we *really* are deep, down inside.

This “emotional core” as I call it, is the most sacred, vulnerable place inside of us where we are both the most sensitive, *and* the most powerful. And when we can live authentically from that place, we can create the life we want.

The hardest part for most people is allowing others to get *near* that vulnerable place inside, because we’ve been hurt time and time again by those who’ve crossed our personal boundaries.

This book was written to help you to clear the obstacles that are preventing you from experiencing happiness to the fullest. When you are able to clear the path to happiness, you don't have to seek it, as it will reveal itself from within.

Thank you for picking up this book.

You are amazing!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Paul Collins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "P" and a long, horizontal flourish at the end.

Happiness Really Doesn't Exist

Sorry to break it to you, but it doesn't.

Happiness really isn't *anything*, which is why so many people don't feel it and can't seem to find it. Well, let me rephrase that: Happiness *is* something, but that *something* is more like a bucket, rather than what's *in* the bucket.

Why I Say "Happiness" Doesn't Exist

"Happiness" doesn't really exist, at least outside of a feeling. The *feeling* of happiness exists and *is* real, and for all intents and purposes, that makes *happiness* real.

But if you say, "*I just want to be happy*", you will have a hard time articulating to people what you *really* want because happiness is not something that's actually tangible.

Happiness is one of those all-encompassing words that means different things to different people. But how do you define happiness? When you think about what it means to be happy, what comes up for you?

For me, one of the many things that comes to mind is having a wonderful person with whom to share life. But when I start to dig a little and ask myself, "What will having a wonderful person to share life with do for me?" I come up with an answer like, "I enjoy sharing experiences in life with someone else."

I can dig even further and ask, "By sharing experiences in life with a wonderful person, what does *that* do for me?" And I come up with, "It allows me to feel like I have someone else in my life to go through all the good times and bad times. It comforts me to know that I don't have to face everything alone."

The deeper I dig, the more meaning I uncover about what the word "happiness" means to me. It's no longer directly caused by having a romantic partner in my life, but more about what it feels like to have support and comfort through both the good times and the bad. I could probably dig even deeper than that, but I think you understand where I'm going.

As you dig into the reasons for your answer on what happiness means to you, you'll soon realize that happiness isn't something you can attain by seeking it, but instead what gets *revealed* when you focus on, process and release what makes you unhappy.

But I promise to not leave you hanging with that thought!

The happiness you want *is* real, and *can be felt through and through* when you know how to eliminate all the obstacles along the path.

I won't take the easy route, and tell you to "think positively!" because that doesn't work when the path is full of emotional obstacles. The path to your happiness must be cleared, which is what I'm going to be helping you do throughout this book.

Happiness *is* absolutely available to you if you follow my lead on this journey. And there are real, practical steps you can take to make it happen. So let's take the first step towards your happiness now.

Do You Really Know *How To Be Happy?*

Happiness is [intrinsic](#). *We are hardwired to be happy.* But over the years, we end up blocking the path to our intrinsic happiness, so we lose touch with it.

We are born happy. Unfortunately, a lot of us are also born into dysfunction. As soon as we are aware of the dysfunction, we unconsciously start creating mental roadblocks to happiness. As children, we laugh and play, enjoying and exploring life as much as we can. Then as we grow into adults, we lose some or most of those qualities as the various dramas of life kick in.

You cannot seek to attain happiness, you can only seek to let go of all the repressed, negative emotions in your life.

Once the mind is free from the obstacles like pain, anger, guilt, and sadness, the outcome is that intrinsic state in which we were born. It's that childlike freedom and playfulness that we once embraced.

Unfortunately, too many people aim to *be* happy. So they take steps toward what they believe will create happiness in their lives. They go after money, or a romantic partner, or material possessions, or a number of other things. When the reality is that, even though those things will enhance their lives, the good feelings will not last if there are still lingering fears and painful emotions from the past. And after they've achieved success in one or more of those areas, unhappiness starts to kick in once again.

My advice is to address what is causing your emotional hurt first.

The negative emotions you carry around are blocking your natural state of happiness.

If you have nothing to fear or be angry about, or nothing to feel sad or guilty about, you'll be happy!

The body will return to its natural state, sort of like an emotional [homeostasis](#), when all of those negative thoughts and feelings have been processed and released. Happiness occurs naturally when the emotional pain from your past no longer bothers you. It is not something you strive for or create. It's something that materializes on its own.

But as you know, you can wait for years, and things may never change. At least, until you intervene. So what you really need to do is learn how to close the book on those old events so that you can move on in life.

“But, why *can't* I just be happy? “

Why can't happiness just exist, so that we can feel it inside and out, and not have to worry about all this negative stuff in our lives? That sounds like something worth talking about. Let's get into that next.

Why Can't You Just Be Happy?

I want you to think about happiness, and what that word means to you. One of the most difficult problems to solve is when someone says, "I just want to be happy!" because they don't say *how* they want to be happy.

The "how" is a mystery, even to the person asking!

So let's dig into that, right now. I'm going to ask you a couple of questions that I really want you to think about. In fact, you'll probably *have* to think about them because of the way they're worded.

Are you ready? Here's the first one:

What's missing from your life that would make you happy if you had it?

Before moving on to the next question, find out if you can come up with any answers to this one. *What is missing?*

If you come up with something immediately, don't let yourself get away with it that easily. When you come up with an answer, answer this next question:

What else is missing in your life that makes you happy?

This helps you dig a little further down into your subconscious mind. Your immediate answers are what float around in your head most of the time. The answers that take a little longer to come up are the ones that are buried a little deeper, and are closer to a more authentic place inside of you.

Whether you came up with a million answers or even zero for that last question, let's move on to the next one:

What's present in your life that makes you unhappy?

That one will either be harder or easier to answer than the last one. But, both are worded in such a way to help you focus on which components in life make you happy or not.

When you find out what's missing that creates happiness in your life, you'll know what you need to focus on to fulfill those missing components.

And, when you figure out what's *present* in your life that makes you *unhappy*, you'll know what you need to work through, or get away from, so that happiness will happen by *default*.

Clearing the Mental Roadblocks to Happiness

Remember, happiness is intrinsic. It is inside of you, just waiting to be revealed. But mental roadblocks are the obstacles that get scattered along the path to happiness that prevent you from experiencing it completely.

The Three Ways Mental Roadblocks are Created:

1. *When you experience a traumatic event*

A traumatic event could be something you experienced as a child, or even yesterday. This is when something that you aren't equipped to handle happens to you, and you are affected by long-lasting negative emotions because of it. It doesn't have to be devastating, but when experienced as a child, it typically *is* devastating.

You can also be in the presence of trauma happening to someone else, and become traumatized by witnessing it. As you may know, there are some things that can't be "unseen", and therefore, the emotions surrounding that event can linger on.

2. *When you don't honor your personal boundaries*

When someone crosses your personal boundaries, and you feel violated or walked on, this builds mental roadblocks in the form of resentment, anger and other forms of upset. If you are unable or unwilling to stand up for yourself (or even others) in certain situations, you will start to build *huge* mental roadblocks, causing happiness to seem farther and farther away every time it happens.

3. *When you follow beliefs that don't serve you*

Beliefs that don't serve you are the kinds of beliefs you created when you were younger. These beliefs form typically as a defense mechanism for your survival.

For example, I grew up in an alcoholic household. So one of the beliefs I created was that in order to live a somewhat normal life, I had to become the *perfect* child that never did anything wrong. After all, if I did the "wrong" thing in front of the drunk, he might attack me, either verbally or physically (he never physically attacked me, but the threat was always there).

After I moved out of this toxic environment, I *never* changed that belief. So I took it with me into "normal" relationships, which caused huge problems. I had set such high standards for myself that I believed the closest people in my life had to do the same. This caused me to be extremely judgmental, and look down on people who didn't meet my high standards.

This ruined many of my relationships. When I finally figured out that I was the cause of all of my breakups because of a belief system that no longer served me, I worked on changing my beliefs. This has helped me accept everyone for where they need to be in life, and has

released the burden of having to judge people. It sounds odd when I say it that way, but judging people *was a huge burden!*

So once the mental roadblocks disappear, and you are able to feel life without any lingering emotional pain, happiness arrives. And by the end of this book, you will know some solid steps you can take in the direction of your happiness.

I promise, I won't tell you that all you have to do is "think positively!", but I will ask that you stay open to some of the ideas I'll be presenting.

There *is* actually a quick path to happiness, but most people cannot walk that path. Most people are not in a situation where they can simply drop their ego and live a basic life, freeing themselves from attachments, and therefore, allowing happiness to seep in automatically. We are all tethered to many obligations and responsibilities in our daily lives, so the possibility of *letting go completely* doesn't exist for most of us.

Do I recommend a complete surrender of everything? Well sure, if that were practical. After all, when you can let go of everything but the basics, happiness will come from the simplest things. But, most of us can't let everything go and climb the spiritual mountain to find ourselves, so we need to learn to adapt and evolve in a very demanding world.

Happiness really *is* just waiting to be revealed inside of you, but you will have to eliminate some of the mental roadblocks to discover it. I went through an unhappy period of time in my life, so discovering what truly made me happy was essential to both my mental and physical health.

The Worst Job I've Ever Had

Back when I was 24, I had a job as a service dispatcher for an alarm company. I was pulled from another department, given a raise, and asked to answer the phones all day from angry customers who demanded immediate service on their alarm systems.

Because alarm systems tend to make a lot of noise, every customer believed that *their* call was the most important call, so they'd always demand a technician to come out right away. After all, they can't have the alarm system beeping at them every 10 seconds, or worse, blaring loudly through the neighborhood!

So the job I had was very demanding. It was the first time in my working life that my job actually created physical pain. I was getting headaches, and the stress of the work was wearing me down fast. I went from working as a generally happy customer service person, talking with friendly people and fixing relatively easy problems, to a service dispatcher where almost every caller was either angry, or not used to hearing "I can't send a technician right now" for an answer.

I'd get flack from all sides too. Not only were customers calling in directly, but calls were also being transferred to me from other departments, including the department I used to work in.

It was the absolute worst job I've ever had. Not only were many of the callers already angry by the time I got their call, but I also never had enough technicians to send to these screaming customers. Some would be so angry that they would yell and curse at me, and continually call me back, until a technician arrived at their home or business. It was the ultimate test in toleration and patience (and mine was wearing thin fast).

So for 5 days a week, 8 hours a day, I was dying inside. I realize it's not as challenging as some jobs out there. For example, laying tar on a roof on a hot summer day in Florida doesn't sound appealing to me at all (if you do this, hats off to you!). But my reality was the only reality I knew, because *I was living it*.

Even though others in the world have suffered much worse, in the moment it was impossible to compare my situation with anyone else's.

We only know our own suffering best.

I was going to a job I hated out of obligation. I felt obligated to make a paycheck, obligated to the commitment I made to the company to do the job, obligated to the customers that needed someone there to help them, and obligated to my co-workers to not quit and leave them with all these problems.

I was obligated to everything and everyone, *except myself*.

You know what happens when you put the oxygen mask on the person sitting next to you before you put it on yourself right? By the time you put yours on, you're passing out.

You forego your own health and well-being because you believe the best course of action is to save someone else first. Sure, you might be able to save one other person, but what if you had more to save? You wouldn't be able to stay conscious long enough to do so.

That's how I felt in this job. I was giving everyone else oxygen as my reserves were being depleted. High stress, and high demand, with no breaks were wearing me down fast. I even remember going to the bathroom once, and one of the executives coming in there and asking, "Paul, are you in here?"

I replied with a slow and confused, "Yeah?"

He said, "Oh, uh, there's no one answering the phones. We're just making sure you're here."

I said, "Well, I *do* have to go to the bathroom on occasion."

He's like, "Yeah, of course. Just wanted to make sure you were in the building"

I thought, 'Seriously? Did they just hunt me down a couple minutes after I left my desk, in the bathroom no less?'

Now you can tell what the expectations of the job were. Like I said, I was getting it from all sides.

So after about six months of doing what I believed I "should" be doing, I got called into the General Manager's office. His exact words were, "Well basically, I'm replacing you."

"*You are?*"

I felt a sudden glimmer of hope and fear at the same time.

"Yeah, we're going to stick John in there. You're welcome to take your old job back on the other side of the building in customer service, but you'll be getting a dollar less an hour."

At this point, a dollar less an hour sounded like the biggest raise I'd ever gotten in my life. It was like paying for my freedom.

Still in sort of a shock because my life was changing before my eyes, I said, "Yeah, I'm definitely interested." He said, "Well alright. Thanks for understanding." Then he dismissed me.

When I left the office, I think my headache went away immediately. I felt this huge relief come over me, and I sat at my desk for the last time to clean it out, and get back to a job I really enjoyed.

The Plague of the Mind

So, the path to happiness is not just about figuring out *what* makes you happy (although, it does help to know that too!), it's about clearing out the mental blocks that prevent that intrinsic state of happiness from *being*.

Remember, *happiness is intrinsic*. It is hardwired in us from birth. It exists *inside*. It doesn't have to be created, it just has to be revealed. And when you clear the path of mental roadblocks, you are clearing the path for happiness to shine through, and out into the world.

Our natural, default state is balance and happiness.

“Being” is happiness.

Being is that state you can “be” in when whatever plagues your thoughts, is released. If past fears and hurts keep rising, they prevent happiness from happening. If future fears and anxiety show up, they also prevent happiness.

Whatever plagues your mind is what prevents you from being.

What I call “plaguing” your mind, is when an emotion continually reminds you that it exists. If you went through a traumatic experience when you were younger, you have either processed it and let it go in some way, or you haven't, and are still *plagued* by the thoughts and emotions you have surrounding it.

Perhaps “plagued” is a bit dramatic, especially if you've done some personal growth to release a lot of it, but you get the point. It's these reminders that are always sneaking up on you to let you know that what happened in the past hasn't been resolved yet.

That's what the mind does: *Whatever isn't resolved or hasn't been fully expressed, comes back as a reminder to give you a chance to resolve it.*

When you aren't able or willing to resolve it at that time, it sinks back into the depths, waiting to return another day.

But that's no fun. You don't want negative emotions to go back there and stay unresolved. You want to resolve these things as they come up, so they don't fester inside of you, creating a low-level state of sadness, anger, or fear in the background.

You don't want to have to deal with them again.

On my podcast, [The Overwhelmed Brain](#), I talk about expressing your emotions a lot, so feel free to refer to that free resource anytime if you want to explore this further.

But for now, let's talk about some real steps we can take to start clearing these mental roadblocks. The more we clear, the *more clear* we become.

Thoughts and emotions come and go, but repetitive thoughts and emotions are opportunities to grow. They are consistent reminders that we have some work to do. So, I'm going to help you get to work by walking you through a few processes that will allow these thoughts and emotions to rise up and *out* of you.

Wouldn't that be a treat? Let's dive into this and begin the journey.

Clearing the Path to Happiness

The Hazards of Denial

If you are plagued with negative thoughts, then don't pretend as if they don't exist. And, don't fool yourself into thinking that if you ignore them, you'll be fine once they go away.

A thought and emotion that rises up is an opportunity to grow. Denying that you feel bad, or thinking that it's not a problem for you, *isn't healthy*. It only delays the inevitable, which is that these emotions - these feelings - will never go away on their own. You must face them head on to process and release them.

I know several people who, when those plaguing thoughts arise, stuff them back down with food.

“Oh, here comes an emotion I don't want to feel... *where's that cheesecake?*”

This is a form of denial, in the sense that you are denying yourself the opportunity to experience the emotion. Of course, stuffing emotions with food can be a serious problem for some people. The emotions are unwanted, and the “drug” of food makes them go away.

But we all know where this leads us. Stuffing emotions back down can be unhealthy on its own. But to use food, drugs, or alcohol as an aid to suppressing them creates an addiction.

The cycle would go like this:

You feel bad, you eat to feel better.

You feel bad, you drink to feel better.

You feel bad, you smoke to feel better.

This is the formula for an addiction. It is the quick high caused by suppressing emotions. It's like being addicted to pain pills. You're always taking a pill anytime there's a hint of a symptom.

Staying in denial causes you to avoid dealing with pain. And every time you stuff the emotions back down, you create *even more* pain in the long run. Stuffing negative emotions means that you are keeping them in the body. You feel them, and they are not pleasant. And sometimes, they are even destructive.

Even though they can be destructive, I'll give you some advice that doesn't sound logical, and may even go against everything you believe in:

Allow the negative emotions to rise and feel them stronger than you've ever felt.

If you are already in denial, and stuffing negative emotions back down, then you already know you have the ability to control these emotions if they simply get too intense. But deep down is where the original problem lies, and you probably think they're *already* too intense, so you don't want to feel them. And you subsequently suppress them.

But try it. Allow the negative emotions to rise up from way down, and let them get stronger than ever before.

Now of course, you'll want to do this in a place you feel safe. So make sure you *feel safe* before starting this process. This is some deep stuff, and it's not incredibly comfortable, but if and when the emotions get intense, I want you to have a safe place to return to.

Feeling these emotions stronger than you have before allows them to get closer to the surface to be released. The stronger your emotions are, the *closer* they are to being released.

Remember that, because when things seem painful, emotionally speaking, the pain is an indicator that you are *that much closer* to releasing them.

The Threshold of Emotional Pain

I used to be a real judgmental person. When I met my future wife back in 2006, I found out that our relationship histories were completely different. I had had only a few partners up to that point, but she had many more.

This bothered me so much, that I actually thought I wasn't going to be able to have a relationship with her. When she shared with me how many partners she had, I suddenly felt inferior and emasculated. In that moment, I felt like she was cheating on me with every guy she ever slept with! And because of that, I was in a lot of emotional pain.

Of course, she was not cheating, but my mind made it real in the moment. My thoughts created pain that stemmed from my self-talk of, "How can this girl I'm in love with have had more partners than me? Why would she sleep with so many people?"

As I said, I was very judgmental, but also very insecure.

This news was really damaging to my then fragile masculinity. Plus, I was taking it on as if her sexual history was happening *now*, as if her past was a threat to our present relationship. I actually felt... *small*.

This caused pain inside of me - real, debilitating pain. That may sound odd to you, but I really hated the fact that my girlfriend had had more sexual partners than I did. I felt less worthy and maybe even a little 'holier than thou', because as a judgmental person, few people could live up to my standards. I thought, "Anyone who sleeps with that many people must be a bad person." *Clearly*, I had some healing to do.

If I was going to help this relationship succeed, I needed to figure out how to get past the pain that developed inside of me. At first, I was in denial. I chose to ignore the pain, and “know” that eventually this emotional hurt would go away.

By ignoring the pain, I was able to make forward progress in our relationship. However, those bad thoughts and feelings kept sneaking up on me. I’d get triggered by something, and the pain would return. I’d say things to myself like, “I wish she didn’t have so many partners, and that she was more of a long-termer like me all her life.”

My ego was bruised, and I couldn’t accept that everyone has a past that is different from mine.

But I knew that these thoughts and feelings were unhealthy. They were making me unhappy, and they were definitely interfering with our intimacy. So I chose to stop living in denial.

I decided that instead of trying to suppress these thoughts I was having, and repress the emotions that were coming up, I would do the reverse. I decided that when a thought came up, I would *intensify* it, make it bigger, add *more* of what I didn’t like to it, and make the scene as rich, painful, and powerful as I could possibly make it.

That sounds strange, right? *But I had to do it.* I had to get *past* the point of my threshold of pain that I could never get past before, in order to blow it right out of my system. I chose to intensify *everything* in the thoughts I was having.

I made the imagery more graphic, the sound more clear, and even increased the emotions I was feeling too. If I felt anger, I made sure to amplify my anger. If I felt sad, I increased my sadness.

The more I ramped everything up, the closer I got to releasing all of it.
And that’s what happened.

I intensified the pictures, the sounds, the emotions, and all of the other thoughts so much, that my negative emotions finally blew up and out of my system.

I’m not sure how else to explain it. After a few times doing that, not necessarily in the same day, her past didn’t bother me anymore. It was like the thoughts I used to have had no effect on me whatsoever. *I finally released them.*

But what happened? How did it happen?

Here are a couple of possible answers:

1. I imagined and felt what I created in my mind so intensely, that my normal, everyday thoughts after that were tame in comparison. I became *desensitized*, you could say.

It's like when you watch the same scary movie over and over again. After repeated viewings, the scary parts aren't so scary anymore because your brain has gotten used to them. Once your brain knows what's coming, there are no more surprises, or triggers.

2. All pressure has to be released eventually, so the pressure that built up in me finally popped. In other words, think of blowing up a balloon. If you blow it up, then release some air, then blow it up again, then release some air, you are keeping around the same pressure in the balloon at all times. It will never fully deflate, and it will never get larger and pop.

Like this balloon, my emotional hurt was always lingering around the same level of pressure. But, I wanted to find out what would happen if my emotional balloon *popped*. What would happen if I continued to feel worse and worse, allowing all the pain to just take over?

What I found out was that after the emotional balloon pops, *there's no more balloon!*

No balloon... no more negative thoughts and emotions.

Does that make sense?

My emotional balloon hit the threshold of pressure where the pain got so bad, it burst and disappeared. The balloon was gone.

Be careful when using this process, because it can be intense. More than likely, if you have some deep stuff going on, you've probably *never* chosen to voluntarily make it feel worse. You've probably chosen to repress the emotions, and suppress the memories. After all, why would you ever want to feel any worse than you already do?

Find a safe place and blow up the balloon just a little more than you've done before. I say "safe" because not only do I want you to feel safe doing this, but I also want *others* to be safe if *they* are the triggers for your negative emotions! I don't want you feeling the extremes of your anger then "going off" on anyone.

When you are in this safe place, blow up the balloon a little more each time. If it takes days or weeks, or even months, go at the pace with which you're comfortable. Then when you get to the point where it pops, those old thoughts and emotions will no longer have control over you.

Wouldn't that be nice? Let's talk about another method to clear a path to happiness.

The Momentum of Acceptance

Unfortunately, repressed thoughts and emotions aren't the only obstacles to happiness. The ongoing challenges in everyday life can hinder us too! These are sometimes unavoidable and often emotionally draining.

Maybe it's a relationship problem you face, or a financial challenge, or an issue at your job. Maybe someone owes you money, or perhaps you care for someone that requires a lot of attention. Whatever the case, if there are any ongoing problems or challenges in your life, it's time to take action and do whatever it takes to resolve them.

Now, it's possible you can't resolve them. You could have a special needs child or an outstanding bill that will take years to pay off. Or you could be in a different situation that simply won't go away for any of a number of reasons. So, when facing a challenging situation, here's the first thing to ask yourself:

Is there a solution to this challenge?

If you answered "No", then *really* consider if you've sat down and thought of *every* possible solution. Has everything been explored? Or, have you "given in", *knowing* that there is nothing else you can do?

Also, have you reached out to other people experiencing the same problem? Sometimes a simple search on the web will help you find people experiencing the same issue, with resolutions you haven't even considered yet.

There is almost always a solution you haven't thought of, even though you may believe you've considered every option. Reaching out to others, whether through meetup.com, a support group (both online and locally), or even your local community center or church, will help you get more than one perspective on a problem.

I'll admit, some challenges are simply unavoidable. My sister and her husband have a child who will require constant attention and care for the rest of his life. As much of a blessing this child is to them, he is also a challenge. It can be tiring to continually monitor and care for someone, but they are truly dedicated to doing so.

In fact, I've never once heard my sister or her husband complain about their son, or the challenges involved in raising him. He *does* require special attention, and will require it his entire life. This is something they have learned to **accept**.

You've heard the term, "*It is what it is*" right? When you give in and accept that, no matter what happens you will always be in this situation, you *accept* what you cannot change.

By accepting what "is", the challenges become easier to cope with. It doesn't mean the situation is any easier, but your coping abilities strengthen, and your conflict with what *is* decreases.

Now, that doesn't mean you 'give in', in every situation. But some seemingly impossible to resolve situations *can* be changed. You just may not have found the solution to change them yet.

For example, if you're in an abusive relationship, there are [steps you can take](#) to change that situation. This isn't something that you simply "give in" to, as abuse is unacceptable at any level.

You are certainly worthy and deserving of more.

But for my sister and her husband, they could look into getting a nanny to take care of their son. It may mean one of them has to work more hours to pay for it, but it *is* an option.

But they've decided to work with him, and raise him themselves. There is no right or wrong step to take. What *you* do when you're in a situation that cannot change is to accept the solution that you come up with.

Acceptance is a powerful place to be, and can change your life completely. But some people can't come to terms with the challenges in their life. For a lot of people, accepting circumstances means *agreeing* with those circumstances.

Acceptance doesn't mean agreement. Acceptance means you stop resisting what is.

When you accept, you allow circumstances to be what they are, whether you agree with them or not. For instance, when my stepfather verbally abused my mom and she chose not to leave the situation, I had to accept that as a fact. I couldn't force her to do something she didn't want to do, so I accepted without agreeing.

By accepting her choice, I chose not to let the situation bring me down. I knew that she'd call me if she ever needed me, but I stopped putting my time and energy into convincing her to leave.

My sister and her husband may have had a hard time in the beginning with their child. They may *still* have a hard time with certain aspects of raising him, but from what it appears, *they have accepted it*. They do not resist what they cannot change. They have decided that they are going to raise him the best way they know how, no matter what.

And, I realize I'm talking as if he is a problem. But really, I'm just projecting. If he were my son, I'll admit, I could foresee a lot of difficulty raising him. But in reality, he's a kid just like any other that simply requires more attention. That's it. *He* is not a problem.

Really, anything can be a challenge to someone who is not equipped or resourceful enough to handle it. So even though my sister's son may require more attention than the average child his age, as long as his loving parents have equipped themselves with the resources and energy required to raise him, he's actually *no problem at all*.

Do you see how this fits into doing whatever it takes to resolve ongoing challenges? They are raising two children, and one requires more attention than the other. They've done whatever they needed to do to make the situation manageable. And most of all, they've

accepted the situation as an unchanging aspect of their lives. They don't use their child as an excuse for their woes, and they refuse to play the victim. I am blessed to know them!

Ongoing challenges are tough, I realize. Sometimes you don't have the money, or the leverage, to get out of certain situations. And sometimes you have to wait for something to happen so that you can move forward in life. But when you're in a situation where all that's required is action to change your circumstances, *take action*.

You can stay where you are, and accept what's happening, or you can take action, and *change* what's happening. And when you can't accept what's happening, and also can't change what's happening, *that's* when you become the victim. And being a victim is a place of no power.

Even if you are able to accept what's happening, it doesn't mean you still won't do what you can to *change* what's happening. But when you drop into being the victim, you invest into your misery and stay in a rut.

I could have complained when I was standing in line at the soup kitchen for months, but I chose to accept that I ended up there because of my own choices, and my own mistakes.

I accepted.

Now, I didn't like it! But it was real, and I chose not to resist it. But, *because* I didn't like it, I took action and got myself out of it.

Like I stated before, don't confuse acceptance with "agreement". You may not like the situation, but at least once you accept it for what it is, *it no longer has power over you*.

And once you gain your power back by fully accepting what is, you can then choose to change it if you want... or not.

No Lingerin' Allowed!

Like the people who ignore a sign like "No Lingerin'" in front of a store, your negative emotions will linger, ignoring your desire to have them go away.

When you're able to forgive a debt, *you clear a path*. That doesn't mean that you should forgive a debt that is being repaid, or that you know will be repaid. I'm talking about debts that have been lingering.

You know the types of debt I mean:

You paid for lunch for someone because they were going to pay for yours next time. Then next time came, they didn't pay, and it was never mentioned again. But ever since that day, you *still* think about how they owe you lunch. And it gnaws at you every time you see them. You can't form a sentence around them without thinking '*they owe me lunch!*'

Whether it's lunch or gas money, when you can "go beyond" whatever is obligated to you, you will be freed from the self-imposed prison of expectation.

Let me reword that, because I got a little tricky there!

Liberate yourself from whatever you feel you are obligated to.

When you can forgive a lingering debt or obligation, you are free from it *forever*. You are free of the negative emotions surrounding it, and you can once again enjoy being around the person or people indebted to you, if you so choose to.

I don't know how many hundreds, or even thousands of dollars I've lent to people over the years that I knew I'd never see again. Whatever I lend, whether it's money, material items, or time, I simply let it go at that moment whether they promise to pay me back or not.

I *know* (whether it's true or not), they won't pay me back. And I forgive the debt immediately.

Well, I shouldn't say *every* time. I don't know if I'm actually that enlightened! But, I will say that for the most part I do come to a place of acceptance inside myself. When I get a promise that someone will pay me back for something I lent to them, I simply choose not to believe them.

I don't *say* that of course. But, by letting it go in the moment, it frees me from the emotional attachment to being "paid back". They could be honest and pay me back regardless. But if I let it go at the time, then I can move on without spending too much time thinking about it.

Now, if someone doesn't pay me back, I can choose to continue to be friends with them, or not. Or, if they're family, I'll usually just forgive and forget, because I *want* family in my life.

You might be thinking, "If you've forgiven the debt, then why wouldn't you consider staying friends with them?"

One reason: *I choose to be around honest people*. I may not be worried about getting back what I've loaned to them, but I am concerned when someone makes promises they don't keep.

If it happens once, I'll likely let it go. But once there is a pattern of dishonesty, I let *them* go.

When someone says, "I'll pay you back, thank you so much", and they don't pay you back, your relationship with them will change. Since everyone has a different toleration point with someone who betrays their trust, you will either keep them in your life, or choose to let them, and the debt, go.

Whichever you choose, it's better than holding on to the hope that someday they'll pay you back. Otherwise, you'll get that weird feeling every time you see them, because you'll be thinking about the money they owe you.

I remember in the early 90s, I needed a ride to the auto store to get a part for my car. Without this part, my car wouldn't run. So I asked a coworker if she could give me a ride. She was like, "Sure, no problem!"

Well, her boyfriend came to pick her up, and I went with them to the auto parts store. I remember that ride specifically because he drove like a maniac, but that's not what this story is about.

They drove me to the auto parts store, I picked up the part I needed, and then they dropped me off at my car. I was certainly grateful, and definitely open to helping her whenever she needed a favor in return. And that's what happens typically. Someone helps us, we feel good about it, and let them know that we'd be happy to help them with something they need.

Well, I got my car fixed. And the next day, I was driving again. But, fast forward a few months. A day came where this coworker that helped me, now needed help with something herself. I think I gave her a few dollars for something, I don't remember.

But I learned something I didn't know... I learned that she *never forgot* the favor she did for me. After I gave her the money, she said, "Good! That pays us back for the ride we gave you three months ago."

In my mind, I went, "Huh? All this time you've been thinking about that ride you gave me and have been waiting for me to repay the favor?" I suddenly realized that for the last several months, she'd been *expecting* me to return the favor she did for me many months ago. It had been on her mind, and I finally repaid that debt. *A debt I didn't even realize existed!*

I was so used to friends doing things for each other, that I didn't know some actually kept score!

So when she said that we're 'now even', I learned a valuable lesson about being indebted to someone. Obligating someone else to return to you time, money or energy, by hanging the debt over their head keeps *you* in an emotional prison. Yes, *you*, not them!

It would have been a different story had she mentioned to me a day or two later that I now "owed her". But months went by without a single word. So the fact that it was in the forefront of her mind all this time just tells me that she held onto it. The fact that someone owed her must have been eating away at her in at least a small way.

It reminds me of a child who gets slightly less juice than another child and he yells, "Hey, Billy got more than me. I want just as much as Billy!"

Holding an obligation over someone else's head can make you feel cheated of what you're owed. Holding onto a feeling of being cheated is no way to enjoy life. My coworker felt like I got something for nothing, and was perhaps taking advantage of her generosity. When in reality, I was wide open to helping her with *anything, anytime*. In fact, I helped her at work whenever she needed it. But a full reciprocation of the favor was what she was looking for.

For her, it needed to be an even trade, not unbalanced. So, just like the previous analogy, *I had more juice than her*. And finally, she received the balance of juice she was owed.

After that incident, I made sure to be extra vigilant in finding out if people were *okay* with the outcome of situations like loans and favors. I didn't want them to have any lingering thoughts "picking away" at their mood. Now, I am always sure to ask, "What do I owe you?" just to clarify that there are no outstanding debts I'll need to fulfill.

If there are people in your life that are indebted to you, and enough time has passed - beyond the point of them actually returning it or repaying you in any way - then maybe it's time to forgive the debt.

Maybe it's time to move on from that place, and *clear the path*.

Obligating people is *clutter* to your brain, and it prevents you from being happy and at peace. If you think about it, what's more freeing? Someone that owes you *something*, or someone that owes you *nothing*?

If you really want the money back, ask them. If they can't pay you back, either forget about the debt, or take them to court. But *end the pursuit* one way or another. Don't let the feeling that you are owed something drown you in misery.

When you are in misery, negativity lingers.

Misery keeps you in a bad space. By holding on to the debts of others, you debit your emotional savings account. You lose a piece of yourself by waiting for the return of something that may never come. You get stuck, and stay in a rut, until you feel the balance is restored.

If you have these lingering feelings of negativity because someone owes you something, take action, or move on.

When you start treating most loans of your time and money as a *gift*, you will be a much happier person most of the time. And if people *really do* promise to pay you back, and they don't, then it's time set up a personal boundary to never give them anything again. You can still be friends, but by setting up your personal boundaries, you know where to draw the line with your friendship.

I don't recommend just giving everything away to everyone. I just mean that, when you *do* give, and you *accept the possibility that you will not receive in return*, you will keep your power. You will also keep your friends, if you want to.

Not everyone has learned the lessons of reciprocation, and giving and receiving. Sometimes we need to let those people be, *or* let them go. And when and if those people learn the important personal lessons of 'give and take', maybe you can once again be close to them.

But, no matter what, don't give up your power by giving in to the urge to get what's "owed" to you. If enough time has passed, and it's obvious the other person will not be reciprocating, then take action now for *closure*. Or, simply move on.

Either way, you *end the lingering*.

Pull the Emotional Bucket Up From the Well

I get quite a few letters from people who tell me things about their lives they don't share with other people. They've written about past hurts and traumas that have been bottled up for years! That is until they told me their story.

Do *you* have something that you've never shared with anyone that, when you think about it now, bothers you? Meaning, did something happen in your past that still bothers you today? *And*, have you talked about it? Have you *genuinely* shared your thoughts and emotions about your hurtful past with anyone?

Bottled up emotions are the largest obstacles to happiness. I don't care if you're a multi-millionaire with the freedom to travel the world anytime you want; If you have bottled-up emotions, all that money and freedom does nothing to make you happier.

Sipping a Piña Colada while lying on a sandy, tropical beach means so little when your happiness is hiding underneath of pile of bottled emotions.

When you're able to find a trusted ear, and tell that person everything that bothers you about something that happened to you, whether in the distant past or recently, you allow your thoughts and emotions to *flow through and out of you*.

If you hold back and keep those secrets to yourself, you build a dam in the river of emotions inside you. The flow of who you are is blocked. The flow of happiness gets blocked. You may still be able to experience happy moments, but the negative undercurrent of how you feel *inside* flows beneath the surface.

When you start sharing your story, and all of the emotions that you felt and are feeling now, you start the flow again. You break through the dam and pour the bottled emotions out into the world to be expressed.

I realize I'm talking metaphorically here, but I want to reach the deepest parts of you. Those parts are the bottled up, "dammed" up, and "stuffed down" thoughts and emotions you've never shared or haven't shared enough of with someone you trust.

And if you *have* shared your story, but still feel a lot of bad feelings, then you probably haven't discovered your deepest, most sensitive thoughts and emotions yet. Of course, if there's any trauma in your past, you may need something more involved like professional help.

I know from firsthand experience that trauma *can* be released by allowing all truth to flow out of you, but sometimes that one on one professional guidance can help you through the process even easier. If you can find someone safe and trustworthy so that you can speak your truth knowing that you won't be judged or put down, you will be able to release a lot of repressed emotions from the past.

Don't deny yourself what you need if it's keeping you from a happy life.

If you can't find anyone you feel comfortable pouring your heart and soul to, then write a letter. Writing a letter will help you gain access to your deepest thoughts and emotions. When you write, it slows down your thinking.

When you speak, thoughts that are on the surface come to you right away. When you say, "I'm mad", that's a *surface* thought. When you say, "I'm mad about...", then go on to explain what makes you mad, that's just under the surface.

But when you say, "I'm mad about this, because..." you are digging even deeper. And, typically, the first answer you come up with is not *the* deepest-rooted answer. It can take time for you to get down into the roots, which is why *writing can be so powerful*.

I did this.

My ex-wife reached out to me one night shortly after our divorce, and tried to have a cordial conversation with me via Instant Message (if you don't know what that is, it's like texting on phones, except on the internet).

During our conversation, I felt the need to tell her how "wrong" she was for not giving me a chance to show her this new person I'd become.

The conversation got a little heated and she felt like I was accusing her. It was true! I *was* accusing her. I was upset and still angry about the breakup. I had a lot of repressed emotional pain, that's for sure.

What started as her reaching out to me to establish some sort of post-divorce friendship, turned into a chance for me to blame her for the downfall of our relationship.

Needless to say our conversation didn't go well. And she finally shut me up by wishing me a good life, and shutting down her side of the chat.

Now I was even more upset!

So I wrote this long email telling her how angry I was. I just poured it out too, letting her know that it was “rude and inconsiderate” of her to shut me off during our chat. I also shared that I was in a painful place and hadn’t yet gotten over the end of our marriage.

Well, two days went by and she never responded. So I wrote another email, asking if she got my last email. “And if you didn’t get my last one, *here’s what you missed!*” Can you tell I was upset?

I explained to her all the reasons I was angry with her. I was very detailed. It was raw emotion coming out on virtual paper. This is stuff I hadn’t expressed before, so I had a lot to say. The email was quite long.

When I was done I reread what I wrote to make sure that I conveyed things very clearly. She was going to get the full brunt of my upset, that’s for sure!

But, something had changed. When I was reading through it, I noticed that the intense emotions inside me that were there when I wrote those words had actually dissipated somewhat. The words I used weren’t clearly describing my upset anymore because I didn’t feel the same way I did just a few minutes ago.

So I started changing some words here and there. I deleted some of the more harsh words because I simply didn’t have those same feelings anymore. I was still somewhat angry but not as angry as I was when I first typed out the message.

By the time I was done with the second draft of the email I felt better knowing that I got it all off my chest. But after rereading it *again*, I realized I had lost some *more* of the intense feelings that I had while writing the second draft.

So, *I rewrote it for a third time!* This time stripping away almost all of the emotional words and taking full responsibility for my role of the disintegration of our marriage. I felt so much better and told her that it would be better for me if we just disconnected so that perhaps one day we could meet again as strangers. I just wanted to cut ties and move on with my life. It was closure.

Writing everything I thought and felt was a healing experience. Our thoughts move fast, so by slowing them down to write, we actually learn a lot about ourselves. But more importantly, we latch on to the real emotions happening inside of us, and express the deepest pains we have inside.

That’s what writing does. Writing forces us to move methodically, step-by-step, through our thoughts and emotions. This process is like a meditation, in that it “drip feeds” our thoughts and emotions to allow us to express them as they arise.

My first email to her had all my raw emotion, and was written from a place of fear and hurt. I don't know if she ever read that one. Then a couple days later when I wrote that second email, I went through three stages before ever sending it, and I'm so glad I did!

The first stage was me sharing my deepest, painful emotions. This is what I felt, raw and unfiltered. These words came out easily and I held nothing back. I noticed these emotions flowing out of me as I wrote them. I felt like they were being released simultaneously! I'd spell out an emotional word, and the emotion disappeared from my body.

So when I reread that first draft, most of it just wasn't true anymore. I wasn't as angry or hurt for some reason. The reason I wasn't so angry anymore was because I just expressed myself as if I were talking directly to her. Whether I was writing on paper or a computer screen didn't matter, I was still accessing the deepest parts of me by writing.

Then the third version of the letter was all about what I was going to do *for myself* to help with my own healing. I no longer felt the anger and hurt I used to feel.

In a matter of an hour or two, the hurt I'd been holding onto for *months* disappeared. My anger and blaming disappeared. And, I was clear about my role in the end of our relationship. The sole purpose of the email soon became the first step to letting her go and moving on with my life.

Because of that one process, I recovered faster and faster everyday afterward. It doesn't mean that I *wanted* the end to happen, it just meant I *accepted* it.

I always encourage expression of your emotions and speaking your truth no matter how hard or embarrassing it may be, because it *so healing* in so many ways.

Find someone you can trust, and express yourself. If you're holding onto something, talk with someone, or write it down.

I want you to *heal*. I want you to let this stuff out, everything that bothers you about what happened in the past. Release all the emotions you can't seem to break through, to get to that happiness just waiting to be revealed inside of you.

Whatever you believe is the obstacle to your happiness, express that to someone you trust so that you can clear the path.

You so deserve all the good that life has to offer. And, if you know anyone else that isn't as happy as they could be, then be that trusted person for *them*.

Be that non-judgmental, listening ear they need so that they can heal too. When you provide a safe place in which someone can tell you their truths, you will allow healing to take place.

I want that for you too.

Summary

Happiness is intrinsic. It is hardwired into us from birth. It exists inside of us, and doesn't have to be sought or chased. It just has to be *revealed*. Clearing the mental roadblocks helps reveal that happiness, just waiting to shine.

The first thing we talked about is to stop living in denial. Don't *deny* you feel bad, *acknowledge* it. Face your negative emotions head on, and even *intensify* them. The stronger they are, the closer they are to being released.

All pressure has to be released, unless you are keeping it at a level in which it never blows up, or decreases. Remember, like a balloon, our negative emotions increase and intensify the more we inflate it. However, there's always a point where the balloon pops, and the emotions disappear.

Second, do whatever it takes to resolve ongoing challenges. For the problems that exist here and now, take action to resolve them, or *forgive and forget*. Getting away from lingering problems gets you closer to happiness.

Ask yourself if there's a solution to a challenge in your life. If not, then find the best solution you can, and *accept* that that solution will be the way it is. Reach out to others in the same situation to find out if there are any angles that you haven't considered.

Remember, accepting things as they are does not mean you agree with them. But it helps you clear the path and let go of resistance to what *is*. It also strengthens your coping and creativity skills. Some of the most challenging situations create some of the most creative people.

Third, we talked about considering *all debts paid in full*.

If you're still steaming over the fact that someone still owes you something, *this is only making you feel worse* - it is blocking your path to happiness. If you can't collect the debt, move on. Or, take the final action to collect. If there's still no resolution, count your losses as learnings, and create new personal boundaries around those learnings so that you are protected in the future.

Sometimes, lessons aren't free. But, the ones that cost the most, usually teach the most.

Finally, *talk about your past*. This can be the hardest part for a lot of people, mainly due to shame or embarrassment. I decided to tackle any and all of my own shame and embarrassment head on by talking about my past on the podcast.

I share almost everything I've gone through with the entire world. Not because I'm looking for sympathy, but because I know it helps me to heal. Also, it helps others to heal as well.

When I am able to approach people from a vulnerable place, they open up and choose to share with me from their vulnerable place as well.

It's not always easy. Some of the stuff I share is pretty private, but like I said, it's been a healing journey for me. Sometimes I'll talk about things I've never shared with anyone. Not only as a way to help the listeners of my show through their stuff, but to also help me through any old, negative emotions that may still be lingering inside of *me*.

I once recorded a show where I had to stop the recording, because I ended up crying about what I was talking about! That's kind of hard to admit, because I feel vulnerable when I tell you this. But I also realize that by telling you, it helps me process and release any emotions that I might be hanging onto regarding that experience.

After I started revealing everything on my show, no one ever told me that they were ashamed or embarrassed by me, because we've *all* experienced the range of emotions I talk about. If I tell you about the abuse I got from my stepfather, you are going to relate to it in some way. Whether *you* yourself got abused, or know others that have.

Talk to someone you trust, and tell them what's holding you back from happiness. When I tell you a story of my past, I let a part of those old emotions go. It's healing and nurturing, and clears yet another path to happiness every time.

You deserve a happy life.

Don't deny yourself what you need to create that happy life. Don't lock up and *not* share what's going on inside you with others.

Sure, some people may be shocked by what you have to say. But many others will love you and listen with an open heart. Others still will go into denial and think what you're saying is not true.

Find that trusted person and share with them. This isn't about what they say or do because of what you share, it's about you releasing repressed emotions to move into that positive place inside of you, to *start feeling better now*.

Remember, if you can't find someone to talk to, then put all your thoughts on paper. Slow down your mental processes by writing. It is a phenomenal way to get to the root of your emotions. Write a letter as if you were going to send it to someone if you really want it to be effective.

You can even write it to your future, fantastic feeling self, just to let that future "you" know how you feel now. Who knows... maybe you'll get a response!

Remember, happiness isn't something you attain, it's something that happens by default when your past has been processed and released.

Clear the path, and allow your happiness to shine.

What My Worst Job Taught Me

When I cleaned my desk out for the last time, I can't describe to you the freedom I felt. I felt like my punishment was over, and I was being released from prison. I brought the box containing all my belongings over to my old, familiar department. I sat with the manager to talk about re-establishing my old position. He was extremely happy to have me back.

Not only was I generally happier over there, but because I was happy, my work was phenomenal.

We always do better work when we are happier.

Everyone I remembered was still there, and I was welcomed with open arms.

I was a different person.

Or, maybe I remembered and re-discovered who I used to be. I never got anymore headaches, and the stress all but disappeared. This was where everything aligned, and felt right. This was where I belonged.

I remember the installation manager from the service side would come over to ask questions about certain accounts. He always looked miserable! He made considerably more money than I did, but he always had that look on his face - frustration, exhaustion, and unhappiness.

He finally asked me one day, "*Why are you always so happy?*"

I never thought about it! But, thinking back, I really *was* always happy in that customer service position. I think I told him something like, "Because I remember what it was like to be so miserable, and I am now free from all those obligations."

Of course, when I was in my 20s, I didn't say it *exactly* that way. But when I think about it now, that's *why* I was happy. Someone had to fire me so that I could figure out that I was creating my own misery. Someone had to put the oxygen mask *on me!*

That moment in my life made me realize two important lessons:

1. It's not how much you earn, it's *how* you earn what you earn that fulfills you
2. Almost every job that pays you is a *self-imposed* obligation. In other words, it is absolutely *your* choice to continue along the path you are on

My beliefs back then were that I needed to stay in that terrible job, so that I could continue to make the amount of money I needed to pay the bills I had gotten accustomed to. And,

I'd better not back down from my commitments, especially if I wanted to look good for my boss, my coworkers, my girlfriend, and my friends.

"Look good in front of other people..." I chose *that* over my own health and happiness. There's something very wrong with that picture.

What are you choosing for yourself? What are your challenges?

I tell my story not only to convey a message about career choices, but to also remind you to take care of yourself, and realize that sometimes *you* absolutely need to come first. Otherwise, you will have nothing left to give. You will be depleted. And when you have nothing left, everyone loses.

To continue that airplane analogy, *put that oxygen mask on you first*, and give yourself the vitality you need so that you have so much left over that you *want* to give the excess of who you are to others.

When you are full of this vitality, you will be so abundant that giving to others will be easy and enjoyable.

Final Thoughts

Happiness is one of those abstract words that has so many meanings. However you define happiness, remember that it is *inside of you all the time*. I remember a time when I wasn't happy, but I spotted a glimmer of it, so I knew there was more where that came from.

There's *so much more in you*, and it may take some work to discover it. But *know* that it's there. All you have to do is clear the path to reveal your happiness. You can even visualize the happiness behind all these obstacles in your mind. When you do this, you'll see what's blocking that happiness from coming out.

I believe in you.

You are worthy, and a unique fingerprint in the universe. There's nothing like you anywhere, and there never will be. I want you to know that the light of happiness shines as brightly as the sun in you, because *you are amazing!*

The Overwhelmed Brain

I Appreciate You

Thank you for taking the time to read this book. If you enjoyed what you read, or believe this book would help others in difficult situations, please [leave a review in Amazon](#).

Your reviews help others like yourself decide whether a book is worth reading or not. It empowers people to make educated decisions on what to buy and whether their purchase will be worth it or not.

I always appreciate reading book reviews!

Contact Me

Thank you for taking the time to read this book. If you enjoyed what you read, or have any questions, feel free to write to me anytime by sending an email to:

paul@theoverwhelmedbrain.com

About The Overwhelmed Brain

There are a *ton* of personal growth shows out there. Whether you go to a live seminar to see people like Tony Robbins, or buy someone's audio program designed to motivate you to be happy and successful.

Whatever the case, there's a common thread I've seen and heard through most of them, and that's *repackaging*.

Many speakers and authors repackage what you've already learned and probably tried to apply in your life. So when I created [The Overwhelmed Brain](#) personal growth show, the one thing I wanted to avoid was repackaging what you very likely already knew.

However, there *is* a benefit to watching, reading or listening to repackaged personal development content. Sometimes you don't really absorb what's being taught until it's presented in a way that resonates with you. Whether that's because you really connect with the speaker or author, or because it's worded in a sequence and format that makes sense.

For example, for the longest time, when personal growth speakers used the term "energy" or "vibrations", it bothered the heck out of me. In a way, it still does because they are both all-encompassing terms that could mean anything.

"How did Mary get that raise?"

"Why, she just put out the vibration of abundance into the universe, and it came back in the form of cash"

“Oh, that makes perfect sense!”

No it doesn't.

Ha ha, yeah, I can be somewhat cynical at times. When I created The Overwhelmed Brain internet radio show, I wanted to stay away from abstract concepts like “energy” and “vibrations”, because they weren't a roadmap to learning and growing, they were part of a bigger picture that was missing a lot of the details.

It's like asking, “How'd that person find the love of her life?”

“Oh, she just walked into a bookstore, and the rest is history!”

“Huh? Wait, back up. Who approached who? Who said what? Did they glance at each other? What were the circumstances? Were they both single and was there immediate chemistry?”

Details like this are often left out of many success stories, whether that's success in health and wellness, finances, love, or any of a number of other life events.

It's the details and the step-by-steps that I sorely missed in a lot of personal growth teachings. It's easy for someone to get on stage and say, “All you need to do is to think positively, and say the following affirmations a hundred times a day. Now buy my books and CDs to tell you the same thing, only in a different way.”

OK, I'm exaggerating a little bit. The point is I created a personal growth show for critical thinkers. When you think critically, you question abstract concepts because you want to know the “how” of things. You want to know the “why” of things.

And when it comes down to it, all you really want to know what it takes to get from point A to point B, without having to figure out what the teacher actually means when they use highly interpretative words. If you interpret their words the right way, you win, but if you interpret them the wrong way, you lose. And you're told you just didn't believe enough, or think positively enough.

The only reason I share this is to let you know that I do my best to avoid giving you abstract advice or highly interpretable information. I *do* believe there is a process to follow to become happier and create more peace in your life. And I do my best to give the practical steps to get there.

Sometimes those steps involve just asking yourself questions. Other times, you need to change what you're doing to get a different result. Overall, *you are amazing*, and I'm here to help you realize that one episode, or book, at a time.

For a weekly personal growth tip and updates on new episodes, sign up for the newsletter here: <http://theoverwhelmedbrain.com/tips/>

Need help dealing with an irrational person? Check out the book:

[How to Deal with Irrational People: What to do When Common Sense Fails and “Crazy” Behavior Prevails](#)

Want to dive into yourself even more? Look into these worksheets:

[Values Workbook: Discover what’s most important in all aspects of your life so that you can stop self-sabotage!](#)

[Anxiety Buster Workbook: Ending the worry and anxiety about unresolved problems](#)

To subscribe to The Overwhelmed Brain on iTunes, [click here](#)

About The Author



Paul Colaianni

*Personal Empowerment Coach and
Host of The Overwhelmed Brain*

Back in 2005, I went through a breakup of a 13 year relationship. It was quite a shock to my system. One night she told me she no longer loved me. The next day, she moved out. And shortly afterwards, I fell into a depression.

I got hit pretty hard. I didn't realize how much I took being in a relationship for granted. I was so comfortable (and naive). I didn't see any of the warning signs. The first few months of my depression, I was just trying to stay afloat. I didn't really have my own identity without her in my life. So I wandered around awhile.

I kept working, but it was always dark and lonely inside my head. I thought the best thing to do would be to find someone else with which to share my life. So one day, I joined an online dating site. I figured, maybe this was a good way to meet the woman of my dreams.

Well, I met someone and we hit it off right away. But, she lived 3000 miles away, so I had no clue how it was going to work out. But, after we met in person, we knew we had to be together (none of this long-distance relationship stuff).

So a few months later, I moved to California to be with her.

Well, after living together a while, we realized there was this one big problem:
I was still depressed!

And it was hitting me pretty hard, which made her think she might be better off without me.

She told me she wanted to leave.

That comment was what it took to break me completely. Suddenly, everything I hated about my life came out in tears. I was having a *huge breakdown*.

However, something shifted in me that night. All the crying and talking helped me release so much, that I felt quite peaceful afterwards. It wasn't over, by any means, as I was still depressed. But I realized that by expressing everything that was truly on my mind, it made a huge impact on the both the thoughts in my head, and my emotional well-being.

So I started exploring personal growth, psychology, and communication. I learned and became certified in brain sciences such as hypnosis and neuro-linguistics. I practiced meditation techniques on how to clear my mind and be present. And as I was healing myself, I learned how to communicate with others in such a way that they would also transform.

Unfortunately my marriage did not survive my personal growth journey. By the time I worked through many of my issues it was too late, she left.

The hardest part about the end of my marriage was that we had separated to work on ourselves to be better people for each other when we got back together. And as my issues were disappearing, which was one of the main causes of the problems in our relationship, her love for me was also disappearing. And as I grew closer and more in love with her than ever before, she told me she was no longer in love with me at all.

This was a true test of everything I learned about myself. But even today, I am at peace with just about everything that happens to, and around me. I've learned to stay mindful and present. It's rare that I feel stress or overwhelm, because I address it as soon as I start to feel any discomfort.

I've gotten more in touch with my emotions, and have learned to balance both the nurturing, receptive, feminine side of me, and the assertive, confident, masculine side (we all have both within us). It is this balance, along with staying in the 'now', that has brought more peace into my life than anything ever has.

I now help others break through their own negative thought-stream to live a stress-free life, both by hosting The Overwhelmed Brain and through [private coaching sessions](#) over Skype, on the phone and in person.

I follow my passion of helping others by sharing my knowledge and experience both face to face, and on the air with the entire world.

Thank You

I am grateful for you. **You are amazing!** Thank you for being there for me, listening, reading, learning, and growing. I look forward to connecting with you again.

Acknowledgments:

Editing and proofreading:

Caroline Pincus

Why I Do What I Do:

You! There is no reason to needlessly suffer because of your own emotional prison. If you are suffering, I want to help you. If you have fears, I want you to conquer them, or at least help you understand why you have them so you're not crippled by them.

Listen to the show, read these books, and learn to create the life you want.

I appreciate you.