

## The Wisdom Page

### **The Happiness Project: Or, Why I Spent a Year Trying to Sing in the Morning, Clean My Closets, Fight Right, Read Aristotle, and Generally Have More Fun by Gretchen Rubin**

Reviewed by Tom Lombardo

*"Happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence."*  
Aristotle

Is happiness the good? Is the pursuit of happiness a worthy goal? Or is it a self-centered and shallow aspiration? In spite of the "pop culture" and "self-help" appearance of this book, I found it to be very thoughtful, well-researched, personable, engaging, and highly practical.

Gretchen Rubin makes a strong case that increasing one's happiness, indeed, is a very worthwhile goal to pursue, having great benefits and positive effects on all aspects of life, psychological, inter-personal, social, and even ethical. In *The Happiness Project*, she develops a general theory of happiness that is anything but shallow (in many ways resonant with Aristotle's concept of happiness), where happiness is an accomplishment--even a virtue--and further, she articulates a systematic program for how to realize greater happiness in one's life. Of particular note, Rubin works from a "resolution" framework, rather than a "goal achievement" framework: A resolution is something maintained as an ongoing new feature of one's way of life, rather than a goal which is something accomplished and completed.

Further, Rubin is really into self-monitoring--keeping lists of resolutions and daily checking off successes and failures; conscientious and methodical self-monitoring turns out to be a key supporting condition for effective self-transformation and the realization of happiness.

Filled with memorable quotes and simply stated principles ("Do good, feel good."), *The Happiness Project* is a great read. Further, it is worthwhile, for those interested, to compare Rubin's approach to [Martin Seligman's](#) books *Authentic Happiness* and *Flourish*.