

RESISTING HAPPINESS



A true story about why we sabotage ourselves,
feel overwhelmed, set aside our dreams, & lack the courage to
simply be ourselves . . . & how to start choosing happiness again!

MATTHEW KELLY

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

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Note: The names of certain people throughout this book have been changed to respect their privacy.

1

Resistance

The alarm clock goes off. It's time to get out of bed. This is your first decision of the day. Will you get out of bed or hit the snooze button? You press the snooze button and roll over.

What just happened? No big deal, right? Wrong. You just lost the first battle of the day. Resistance just kicked your butt. Resistance has broken your will before you've even gotten out of bed. You will most likely be its slave for the rest of the day.

I have been battling resistance my whole life. As we get a little further into this book I think you will discover you have been too. What is resistance? It's that sluggish feeling of not wanting to do something that you know is good for you, it's the inclination to do something that you unabashedly know is *not* good for you, and it's everything in between. It's the desire and tendency to delay something you should be doing right now.

Do you ever feel like you are your own worst enemy? Have you ever thought you could accomplish great things if only you weren't so busy with so many little things? Do you struggle to make decisions with confidence? Are you tired of setting goals and not accomplishing them? Do you procrastinate? Are you afraid to say what you really think and feel? Then this book is for you.

If you've ever tried to accomplish anything worthwhile, then you've been face-to-face with resistance. You may not have called it by that name in the past, but I suspect you will in the future. It helps to call it by its name. In every moment of every day, resistance is there, waiting to pounce.

The hardest war to win is one you don't even realize you are fighting, and the hardest enemy to defeat is the one you don't even know exists. Every day you are at war with resistance.

Make no mistake, resistance is your enemy. It will not quietly go away and leave you alone. You have to slay it like a dragon, and you have to slay it anew each day.

How does resistance manifest? It wears a thousand masks, many of which are so effective we don't even recognize resistance is behind them. Laziness, procrastination, fear, doubt, instant gratification, self-loathing, indecision, escapism, pride, self-deception, friction, tension, and self-sabotage are just some of the ways resistance manifests its ugly self in our lives and causes us to settle for so much less than God has imagined for us. You cannot become the-best-version-of-yourself unless you wake up every morning ready to slay resistance. It stands between you and the person God created you to be. Resistance stands between you and happiness.

You have to break through resistance in order to accomplish even the smallest tasks. I catch myself in a battle with resistance several times a day.

Here's a simple example:

I sit down to write, but instead I start checking my e-mail or thinking about what snacks will be *required* to write something great. This is resistance at work. Sure, I am an accomplished author and have written twenty books that have sold millions of copies, but just like every college student who sits down to write a paper, I will have to slay resistance in order to even get started. The thing about resistance is that it is so simple, so ordinary—and so paralyzing if we are not mindful of it.

This is why most people who start writing a book never finish it. We all know people who are writing a book. I get requests from people all the time to help them get the book they are writing published. They are very keen to speak about the publishing process right now. I always say to them, “Focus first on writing your book. When your manuscript is finished and ready for a professional editor to look at, send me a copy, and then we can talk about publishing options.” More than 95 percent of them I never hear from again. Resistance gets the better of them.

Imagine all the books that are unwritten because of resistance. I wonder if Mozart or Beethoven had an unwritten symphony, or if Picasso and Monet died with their greatest work inside them because of resistance. I wonder how many diseases have not been cured because resistance got between the scientist and the cure. I wonder how many things never got invented because inventors succumbed to resistance. How many men and women didn't become saints because of resistance? Resistance is a slayer of dreams.

Looking back on today, where did you encounter resistance? It was there, wasn't it? In fact, if you really sat down and analyzed your day, you would discover that many times throughout the day you were in a tussle with resistance.

We all battle resistance daily: popes and presidents; kings, queens, and the working class; the CEO and the janitor; the rich and the poor; the educated and the uneducated; the young and the old. Nobody gets to escape the battle with resistance.

The first goal of this book is simply to give resistance a name. Once you name it, you see it differently. Things that we cannot name tend to build in mystery and become dangerous. Simply naming, defining, and learning to recognize resistance in the moments of our days causes it to lose most of its power over us. It is no longer a mystery because we have named it.

When aspiring authors contact me for advice, I always ask them a series of questions about their book. One of those questions is: What is the promise of your book? They usually look at me and wonder what on earth I am talking about. But to me, every book makes a promise. A great book delivers on its promise and an average book does not. Learning to overcome resistance is one of life's essential lessons, and the promise of this book.

The first lesson is that you never defeat resistance once and for all. It is a daily battle.

★ KEY POINT

Resistance stands between you and happiness.

ACTION STEP

🕒 Write down every time you encounter resistance for a week.



Your Quest for Happiness

We resist all sorts of things for all sorts of reasons. But perplexingly, it usually comes down to this: We resist happiness. It's perplexing because at the same time we have an insatiable desire for happiness.

I have been resisting happiness my whole life. I see it clearly now, but I didn't always. I caught glimpses of it here and there throughout my life, but it wasn't until I was forty that I really recognized the patterns. What is most disturbing and humbling is that even now that I know how resistance works, how to recognize it, and how to overcome it, there are still daily instances when I allow it to win.

We tend to see these patterns in other people's lives with much more clarity than we see them in our own. For years I have observed people resisting happiness. We have seen it in the lives of our family, friends, and colleagues. We have all seen patterns of laziness and procrastination cripple people personally and professionally. We have all seen patterns of fear and

self-loathing turn beautiful, intelligent people into a shadow of their true selves. We have all sat by while people we love sabotage their chances at success and happiness over and over again. These are the patterns that we see in people's lives, patterns that make us wonder why.

Then there are the times when we watch as someone we love, against the advice of everyone in his or her inner circle, does something monumentally stupid. We wonder to ourselves, "Why would anybody do something so stupid?" The answer is universal and disarmingly simple: People do stupid things because they mistakenly believe those stupid things will make them happy.

This is the paradox that surrounds our quest for happiness: We know the things that will make us happy, but we don't always do them.

We know how to unleash happiness in our lives, but we don't. Why? Resistance. We are all on a quest for happiness, but resistance gets the better of us.

I know the people, things, behaviors, and experiences that make me happy. It is no surprise to anyone, I suspect, that these are the same people, things, behaviors, and experiences that help me become a-better-version-of-myself.

Working hard makes me happy. And there is no work that brings me more joy than writing. Writing makes me happy, and at the end of a good day of writing everything is better in my world. Still, every time I sit down to write, before I can even get a word down, I have to battle and slay resistance.

A morning walk makes me happy. It clears my mind, fires up my metabolism, and gets the endorphins moving through my body. There is no comparison between a day with a morning walk and one without it. And yet, resistance fills my mind with a hundred excuses at that moment of decision each and every morning.

Sitting down for a few minutes of prayer and reflection at the beginning of the day makes me happy. It gives me the clarity, focus, perspective, and gratitude I need to make the most of the day. But almost every day I am tempted to put it off until later or skip it altogether. Why? The allure of action, the temptation to believe that going somewhere or doing something is urgent. This is one of my first struggles with resistance each day, and resistance knows that this is the most significant battle of the day. If resistance can keep me from praying, it will win many more battles throughout the day.

There are a dozen other examples, but starting my day with prayer, taking a walk, and jumping straight into my work is a bulletproof recipe for me to exponentially increase my chances of having a fabulous day.

What makes you happy? Do you know? Before we jump into that question, a better place to start might be with this question: Are you happy?

Give yourself a happiness score between one and ten over the past three months. Don't base it on how you feel today or over the past week; you might just be having a bad week. Three months gives us a better look. What's your happiness score? Scribble it somewhere on this page.

Most people think they are reasonably happy, and most people yearn to be happier. So, let's do something about that. Let's increase your happiness

score. I am certain that what I am about to share with you in these pages is going to flood your life with happiness, and so much more.

It's time to stop resisting happiness. It's time to stop destroying our own happiness. We do it in so many ways. Do you worry about things you have no control over? Worry destroys happiness. Do you compare yourself with others in an unhealthy way? Comparison is a destroyer of happiness. Do you cling to bad relationships? Bad relationships destroy our happiness. Do you have a lot of self-doubt, or even self-loathing? They are destroyers of happiness. Do you buy things you can't afford and don't need? Debt is a destroyer of happiness and a creator of stress. Gossip, laziness, fear, excuses, negative thinking, ingratitude, and jealousy are all destroyers of happiness.

You are on a quest for happiness. Working out what makes you happy is essential, but so is working out what destroys your happiness. In order to do this, let's explore why we all have such an ongoing desire for happiness.

★ KEY POINT

Find out what really makes you happy.

⚡ ACTION STEP

Identify three activities that increase your happiness. Write them down.
