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Stumbling on **HAPPINESS**

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—MALCOLM GLADWELL, AUTHOR OF *BLINK*



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Amazon.com Review

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• Why are lovers quicker to forgive their partners for infidelity than for leaving dirty dishes in the sink? • Why will sighted people pay more to avoid going blind than blind people will pay to regain their sight? • Why do dining companions insist on ordering different meals instead of getting what they really want? • Why do pigeons seem to have such excellent aim; why can't we remember one song while listening to another; and why does the line at the grocery store always slow down the moment we join it? In this brilliant, witty, and accessible book, renowned Harvard psychologist Daniel Gilbert describes the foibles of imagination and illusions of foresight that cause each of us to misconceive our tomorrows and misestimate our satisfactions. Vividly bringing to life the latest scientific research in psychology, cognitive neuroscience, philosophy, and behavioral economics, Gilbert reveals what scientists have discovered about the uniquely human ability to imagine the future, and about our capacity to predict how much we will like it when we get there. With penetrating insight and sparkling prose, Gilbert explains why we seem to know so little about the hearts and minds of the people we are about to become.

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Most helpful customer reviews

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Technical but written in an accessible, conversational style. Highly worthwhile!

By Suz deMello

A fascinating look at why we do what we do. So good that I checked it out of the library twice for my Kindle, made so many highlights that while I was transcribing them I thought--I should just buy this book because it was so excellent.

The main thesis is that we fail to act in ways that make us happy because we misremember the past and misperceive the present, which makes it almost impossible to correctly figure out what will make us happy in the future.

The author does advise checking out others' reactions to the same stimuli, and discarding the notion that each of us is unique.

I would also imagine that journaling daily, and then rereading would be helpful.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Brilliant and Brilliant and amusing.

By Jose Luis De Ramon

Brilliant and Brilliant and amusing. The way our mind works, the lies that we tell ourselves without knowing, how we deceive ourselves trusting imagination and the power of our mind to make the correct choices.... I've learned so much!. The way our mind works, the lies that we tell ourselves without knowing, how we deceive ourselves trusting imagination and the power of our mind to make the correct choices.... I've learned so much!

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Superbly Insightful (Well Beyond My Expectations)

By Camber

Based on this book's title and a cursory glance at some reviews, I figured that this is probably just another book on happiness, but I decided to read it anyway since the ratings are generally pretty good, credible people have endorsed it, and the topic is important. I'm pleased to report that the book far exceeded my expectations and represents an important and original contribution to this genre. Despite having read quite a few books over the years, including several good ones on happiness, I learned a lot of new and useful things from this book.

In fact, this book is so packed with insights that I'll need to carefully go through it again (which I look forward to). Some readers may feel that the book goes into too many topics which are tangential to the main argument, but I personally very much appreciated the way Gilbert builds his case systematically and thoroughly, providing us with a wide array of intellectual fringe benefits in the process. Indeed, while the focus of the book is on happiness, the scope of the book is actually much broader than just happiness.

The content of the book is mostly drawn from experimental psychology (the good kind), and Gilbert

describes many experiments in just the right amount of detail. I sometimes felt that he neglected plausible alternative interpretations of the experimental results, but I see this as a relatively minor issue. The earlier parts of the book also mixed in some Western philosophy, which I thought was a nice touch. And the many quotes from Shakespeare were also apropos since, after all, Shakespeare just about single-handedly encapsulated the full spectrum of human experience and behavior into his body of work!

Given the book's rich content, it's hard to summarize this book, but I would say that the (greatly oversimplified) main idea is that both our memory and imagination are inherently faulty, which often causes us to choose suboptimally when it comes to decisions which affect our future happiness. We can partly get around that problem by querying people who are currently having the experience we're considering having, but that approach doesn't always work, plus we're inherently resistant to taking that approach anyway. However, again, this is just an oversimplification, and you really need to read this book in its entirety.

Regarding Gilbert's writing style, I think he's quite clear and easy to follow, and he also employs humor throughout the book. To be honest, I initially found his humor superfluous and a bit annoying, but I gradually came to appreciate it, since it lightens the book's atmosphere and thereby helps to sustain the reader's stamina.

Overall, this is a superb book and I highly recommend it if you want to be happier, or even if you're just interested in what makes people tick. Five stars don't even begin to do justice to this book.

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Amazon.com Review

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