

# THE PRE-85 HAPPINESS PLAYBOOK

7 Rules for a Fulfilling Life



Dr. Richard Louis Miller



# INTRODUCTION

I'm Dr. Richard Louis Miller, an 85-year-old clinical psychologist with 64 years of practice experience.

Over these years, I've accumulated a lot of tools that I have found helpful to people. I want to reveal these tools to all of you – open source, no fee, no charge, nothing to mail in, no box tops, no money. This isn't a joke, although I like to be funny. This is the real McCoy: open-source psychotherapy information.

In this collection, I'm going to bring you some tools that have worked for me in my 64-year practice. These are essential for graceful living, and they don't have to cost a lot of money.

I'm here to celebrate my 85th birthday by giving you this magnificent gift. I genuinely hope you try these out. They will change the course of your life for the better. I believe that.

## RULE 1:

# YOU ARE THE BOSS OF YOUR MIND

Two things are essential for graceful living. One is learning how to become a master breather; the other is mind control. This is essential. What I mean by mind control is we need to learn how to control our minds. Our minds are tools. They are not the boss.

The mind would like to be the boss because the mind is a very powerful part of us. It can generate ideas. It can generate pictures, movies, stories. However, we can tell it what to do, what to generate, and what kind of pictures to create if we practice. If we don't practice, it will generate on its own, and then it will try to take over.

You are the boss. You get to choose the mood that you want. I get to choose the mood that I want. Not only that, I can choose different moods at different times of day. All of this is achievable, but it takes practice.

At any time, you may have thought intrusions. You can be doing something, your mind will think of something else. You can be enjoying something, it could bring up something lousy that you don't want to hear about. So it's essential that you learn how to control your mind.

How do we do this? Practice. It's a skill like any other skill, and we have to practice.

# EXERCISE: THE TWO-MINUTE MIND CONTROL PRACTICE

Here's what I want you to do. Take the Miller pledge. For the next three months, practice mind control using this exercise:

- 1** Set aside 2 minutes, 3 times a day. You can do this when you get up in the morning, for a lunch break, and right before dinner.
- 2** Sit comfortably and close your eyes.
- 3** For those 2 minutes, actively direct your thoughts. Tell your mind what kind of thoughts to have, what kind of pictures to create.
- 4** If negative thoughts come up, replace them with positive ones. If your mind wanders, gently bring it back to what you want it to focus on.
- 5** Do this every single day. 60 seconds, 120 seconds, three to six times a day.

You do that for three months, and then let me know what you think. I have found this to be a very helpful tool. If you do this for six months to a year, you'll have a different sense of yourself.

Remember, you are the boss of your attitude. You're the boss of your thoughts. You're the boss of what you see when you close your eyes. Those are all things that you're the boss of. You are responsible for your feelings, your thoughts, and the videos that you create.

## RULE 2:

# THE PAST IS A TRAP

The past is an optimism ruiner. Looking at the past, it brings us down for the most part. Yes, there are cherished memories. We'll talk about those. But there's too much of that old sensationalism.

Now, can you learn from the past? Of course, as the philosopher George Santayana said, "those who don't learn from the past are doomed to repeat it."

You want to go back into some nasty thing and see how you can do it better? Yes, if you can stay solution-oriented. If you want to look it over and see what other methods you could have used for handling that and be creative, fine. But if you're going to criticize yourself, forget about it.

You can't remake the past. Get into the now, emotionally and with the people who are in front of you. Look them in the eye when you're talking, make contact.

There is nothing we can do about the past. You can't remake yesterday.

You can't remake two years ago. My gosh, I can remember when I was a kid growing up, and my grandmother would refer to things that she didn't like, or that bothered her, that were twenty years in the past. It doesn't matter though, whether it's twenty years in the past, or whether it's this morning.

There is only now. **There is no future & no past.**

## EXERCISE: PRESENT MOMENT AWARENESS

Here's a practice to help you stay in the present:

- 1** Several times throughout your day, take a moment to pause.
- 2** Close your eyes and take a deep breath.
- 3** Listen to the thoughts in your head. Are they about the past or future?
- 4** If you catch yourself thinking about the past or future, gently bring your attention back to the present moment.
- 5** Open your eyes and focus on your immediate surroundings. What do you see? What do you hear? What can you feel?
- 6** Engage fully with whatever you're doing in that moment, whether it's a task, a conversation, or simply sitting quietly.

## RULE 3:

# PRACTICE POSITIVE SELF-TALK

Let's talk about the power of positive self-talk. This practice can dramatically change your life, and it's simpler than you might think.

Self-esteem is sort of like a bank. When we have a lot of positive input from ourselves and others, our self-esteem goes up. When we have a lot of negative input, it goes down. This is why it's crucial to be mindful of how we talk to ourselves. Erase negative – delete them, and don't associate with people who say negative things to you. Stay positive, and your internal self-esteem bank will go up, up, up in value.

You replace negative thoughts with positive sentences about yourself. Now that sounds easy to say, but it's really also easy to do. You just have to be willing to do it. You have to go before the mirror and say nice things to yourself, positive things to yourself, at least several times a day.

## EXERCISE: THE DAILY AFFIRMATION PRACTICE

Here's what I want you to do:

- 1** Every day, take time to say four or five positive things to yourself.
- 2** Do this in front of a mirror if possible.
- 3** Speak these affirmations out loud.
- 4** Be specific and genuine in your praise.

This means 150 times a month, that's 1,800 times a year your mind is hearing positive things about yourself. That will have an effect on your emotional well-being.

Yes, it's easy to understand, but it's difficult to maintain. What's the difficulty? Keeping it up and doing it every day, several times. But if you do, it'll pay off. I promise.

Finally, don't just keep the positivity to yourself – spread it around. Say positive things to friends and ask them to say positive things to you.

## RULE 4:

# MOVE WITH PURPOSE

Movement is essential for our health, but it's not just about exercise – it's about moving with intention.

Regular moving is different from moving with intention. Regular moving is when we get out of a chair, we want to walk across the room, we stand up, we walk across the room. Moving with intention is moving each limb and each hand and each part of our body with mental intention of how we're moving.

We're really focusing on how our feet are touching the ground, how our limbs are moving as we swing them, how our body is feeling. It's a hyper-awareness of our motion. It's a very difficult thing to do, it's an extremely interesting thing to do, and it's a very safe thing to do. Because when you move with intention, you don't bump into things and you rarely fall because you're intending what you're wanting to do.

My dogs don't go to yoga classes and they don't go to the gym and lift weights. What they do is they build their exercise into their daily lives. All of a sudden they're walking along and they put out a limb and they go stretch and they do something like this. Or they do the downward dog. They build their exercise into their daily life.

So I've been trying to do the same. Here's how you can incorporate this into your day.

## EXERCISE: DOG YOGA

- 1** While waiting in line or during short breaks, do simple exercises.

For example:

- Do squats while waiting at a store
- Rise up on your toes repeatedly while standing in a queue
- Stretch your arms or legs while sitting at your desk

- 2** Look for opportunities to move throughout your day. Take the stairs instead of the elevator, park further away from your destination, or take a short walk during your lunch break.

- 3** Pay attention to how you're moving. Focus on your posture, the way your feet hit the ground when you walk, how your arms swing.

- 4** Set reminders to move or stretch every hour, even if it's just for a minute or two.

Remember, persistence over time is key. If I do those 90 squats three times a day, that's 270 a day, 5,000 a month and 60,000 a year of squats.

## RULE 5:

# CULTIVATE GRATITUDE

People often ask me, how do you stay so positive at your age? How do you stay positive at any age? And the answer is reminders. I remind myself frequently during the day to stay grateful.

Gratitude is like taking medicine – it's a powerful prescription for mental health.

Gratitude is something that you can practice for yourself and for others. Express gratitude to yourself at least once every day. Sit back, say something nice about yourself out loud, and let it sink in. You want to do a second or a third time during the day? Terrific! But do at least one every day. Three would be better.

The other half is to communicate gratitude to another person at least once a day. Find something to thank them for, something to appreciate them about, something to give them a compliment about.

No phony baloney stuff, real stuff from the heart that you mean.

## EXERCISE: THE GRATITUDE PRACTICE

- 1 Self-Gratitude:** Once a day, preferably in the morning, sit back and say something nice about yourself out loud. Let it sink in.
- 2 Gratitude for Others:** Once a day, communicate gratitude to another person. Find something to thank them for, appreciate about them, or compliment them on. Make it genuine, from the heart.
- 3 Nature Gratitude:** Take 5 or 10 minutes to sit in nature – it can be a local park or your backyard. Look around and take in the different colors of the grasses, the trees, the bark. If there are people or animals, observe them too.
- 4** Do this every day for three months.

It's really important to take a moment, 30 seconds, sit down, close your eyes, check in on yourself, ask yourself, how am I doing? How am I feeling?

This gratitude practice is a way of doing that.

## RULE 6:

# EAT FRESH AND SIMPLE

I've been experimenting with nutrition for the last 65 years.

I've tried being a vegan, a vegetarian, a big meat eater. I've been on low carbs, high carbs. You name it, I've tried it.

Here's what I conclude after over 60 years of experimentation: There are two things that are basically imperative with regard to nutrition. One is common sense and the other is read the labels.

First, common sense says if you have a choice between drinking water that has chlorine in it and drinking clean water that doesn't have chlorine in it, of course you drink the water without the chlorine.

Second, read the labels. When you go to the gasoline station, you read before you put in the gasoline which octane to put in. When you get a prescription medicine, it says take 25 milligrams twice a day. You take 25 milligrams. You don't take 50. If it has a lot of stuff in it other than the primary food, I don't think you want to eat it. Broccoli doesn't need a lot of stuff added to it.

Eat stuff that's fresh that comes out of the ground, you're gonna be okay.

## EXERCISE: THE CLEAN EATING CHALLENGE

- 1** For one week, eat only fresh, unprocessed foods. This means vegetables, fruits, and if you choose, fresh meats or fish.
- 2** Avoid anything that comes in a package, can, or container.
- 3** Read the label of everything you consume. If it has ingredients you can't pronounce or wouldn't find in your kitchen, avoid it.
- 4** Keep a food diary. Write down everything you eat and how you feel after eating it.
- 5** At the end of the week, reflect on any changes you've noticed in your energy, mood, or overall well-being.

## RULE 7:

# CONNECT WITH OTHERS

When I was growing up in high school in New York, I lived in an apartment building with my parents, and we were up on the seventh floor, so I would take an elevator up and down.

People never talked to each other on that elevator. Everybody stood in silence. The same was true in movie theaters, sporting events, and many other places. Lots of people gathering to do group events, be it on an elevator or at a football game, and people not saying hello to the people sitting right next to them.

I'm calling for a cultural change. Start saying hello to the people next to you when you're in places that are new or places that are other than home.

Say hello to the checker at Safeway.

Say hello to the bank attendant.

Really say hello.

## EXERCISE: THE CONNECTION CHALLENGE

- 1** Each day, make it a point to genuinely connect with at least one stranger.
- 2** Start with a simple "Hello, my name is [Your Name]." You can add, "I'm going to treat you with dignity, respect, kindness, and love."
- 3** If appropriate, shake hands or make eye contact.
- 4** Try to have a brief conversation. Ask how their day is going or comment on something positive in the environment.
- 5** At the end of each day, reflect on these interactions. How did they make you feel? How do you think the other person felt?

We human beings are tribal animals. We love doing things together. We love going to ballgames. We love doing social things like sewing circles, reading circles, playing baseball. You know what we love the most? Eating together. Human beings love getting together at a table and eating together.

Let's see what happens when we start saying hello everywhere we go. In elevators, in theaters, in movies, everywhere. Will you join me on that?

# THANK YOU FOR READING THE HAPPINESS PLAYBOOK!



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