

Real Happiness 10th Anniversary Edition

Bonus Content

In this bonus guide, you'll find prompts for journaling or simply reflecting as you journey through the *Real Happiness* experience. These thought starters aim to help you go deeper in your reflective practice. Whether privately in a journal or in a group discussion, these bonus questions take into consideration the modern, realistic challenges you face in the world today. Each part below corresponds to a chapter or section in the book and should be read after you have finished that corresponding section.

CHAPTER 1 BONUS QUESTIONS

In general, where do you find yourself most likely to lose focus and attention? When does your mind wander?

Pause the next time you notice your mind is jittery and concentration is nearly impossible. How does your body feel? How is your breathing affected?

What are three concerns you have about beginning or maintaining a meditation practice?

CHAPTER 2 BONUS QUESTIONS

What is your relationship to happiness? Do you crave it? Trust it? Doubt it?

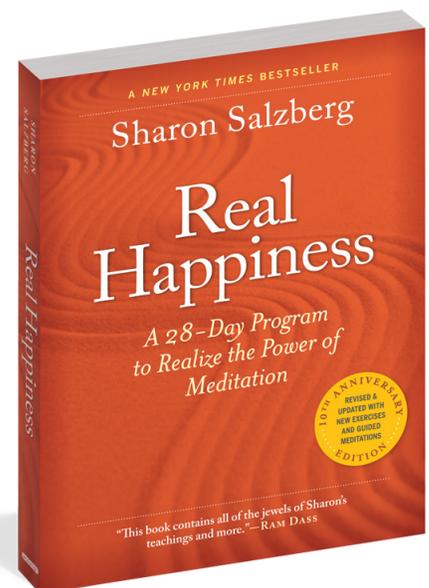
Assumptions block direct experience and prevent us from gathering information that could bring us comfort and relief. List three assumptions you make on a regular basis. For example . . .

I'm never going to be able to fix this relationship.

If I just work harder than everyone, I'll get that promotion.

She voted for someone else, so I have nothing in common with her.

Let's kick open the door. What or who brought you to embrace *Real Happiness* and the 28-day program? Was it a moment of motivation? Was it a friend who inspired you? Write about the steps—complex or simple—that brought you to this commitment.



WEEK 1 BONUS QUESTIONS

DISTRACTIONS

They are a real thing, and in 2020 the possibilities for our attention are at an all-time high. We juggle the text-message pings, the Instagram notifications, the binge-watching, the trending topics on Twitter, the pull of our job, friends, spouse, children, pets. We often don't realize what is taking up so much of our time and concentration. What were the three most time-consuming activities in your life this week? How do you feel about that?

Is your mind wandering when you meditate this week? Great, you're human! What did you say when you realized you had slipped away from the focus on the breath? How did you treat yourself?

WEEK 2 BONUS QUESTIONS

ASSUMPTIONS VS. REALITY

With assumptions, we often project into the future, hold tight to a perceived opinion, or follow a path of associative thinking without awareness of the leaps of logic and reality we just took. Let's stop and think about assumptions this week. List an assumption you have about the following areas in your life. What is the absolute you believe to be forever true?

My relationship (friend, lover, coworker)

My work

My faith/meditation practice

My health

My faults

There is no exact right meditation posture that will propel you to enlightenment. Rather, it's critical to find what works best for your focus, lifestyle, and physical ability. If you can breathe, you can meditate, and it's important to learn to access these tools no matter where you are. This week, we try sitting, walking, and body scan. Following all three practices, list adjectives describing each experience. Are there any similarities? What are the challenges for each? Are you discovering you have a preference?

WEEK 3 BONUS QUESTIONS

This week, we look at the four phases of dealing with emotions mindfully.

Step 1: Recognize

As you work through this week, focus on one emotion that is most prevalent during your meditation practice. Anxiety? Sadness? Joy? Guilt? What is it? Write down your experience.

Step 2: Acceptance

Be open to whatever arises. Welcome the emotion like an old friend. Name that emotion. Acknowledge it, whether it is pleasant or unpleasant. Describe what is happening in your body and mind as you acknowledge and accept it.

Step 3: Investigate

With an unbiased and forgiving approach, what does it feel like to sit with the emotion, rather than quickly avoid or move away from it? In this exercise, we are not examining the activator or impetus of the feeling, but simply the feeling itself. Does it create shortness of breath? Or, perhaps when you experience it, your stomach clenches slightly? Do you become fidgety? Acknowledge and record in your journal.

Step 4: Nonidentification

This week, notice and record the moments that you become aware and accept the emotion that arises. Notice how long they last and how quickly (or not so quickly) they disappear. In that moment, do you recognize that the emotion and who you are—and who you are working to become—are not one and the same? Are you able to experience feelings as they happen and not as a construct for your entire being? Write about your experience.

Immediately following your practices this week, record your mental noting. “Whoa, sadness flooded in.” “I forgot to turn the iron off, agh, I’m distracted, okay noted. In. Out. In. Out.” Was there instant feedback that enabled you to continue your focus? Or did mental noting take you down a distracted path? These quiet acts of recognition are necessary for honing your practice.

WEEK 4 BONUS QUESTIONS

As we practice lovingkindness this week, record the experiences with each of the respective parties. What arises in your first lovingkindness practice? What are your experiences of the last meditation of the week? The same? Different?

A benefactor

A neutral person

A difficult person

All beings

Our modern culture has encouraged divisive communication and relationships. The difficult person in your life could be someone you see every day or even someone you only see in the nightly news. Jot down your experience giving lovingkindness to this person. How does the meditation and effectiveness evolve with each meditation? Does it impact your physical and emotional reaction when seeing this person?

AND BEYOND . . .

Go back to your answers to the first bonus question. What three concerns of starting a meditation practice did you list? Do they still hold true?

*May you be happy. May you be healthy.
May you be safe. May you live with ease.*