

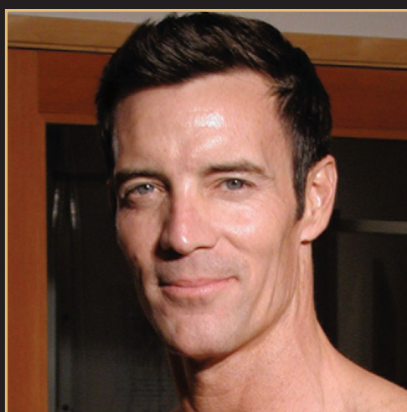


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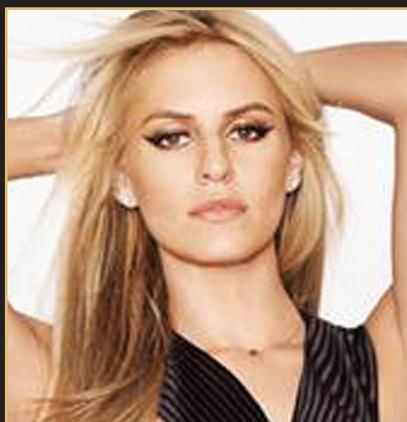
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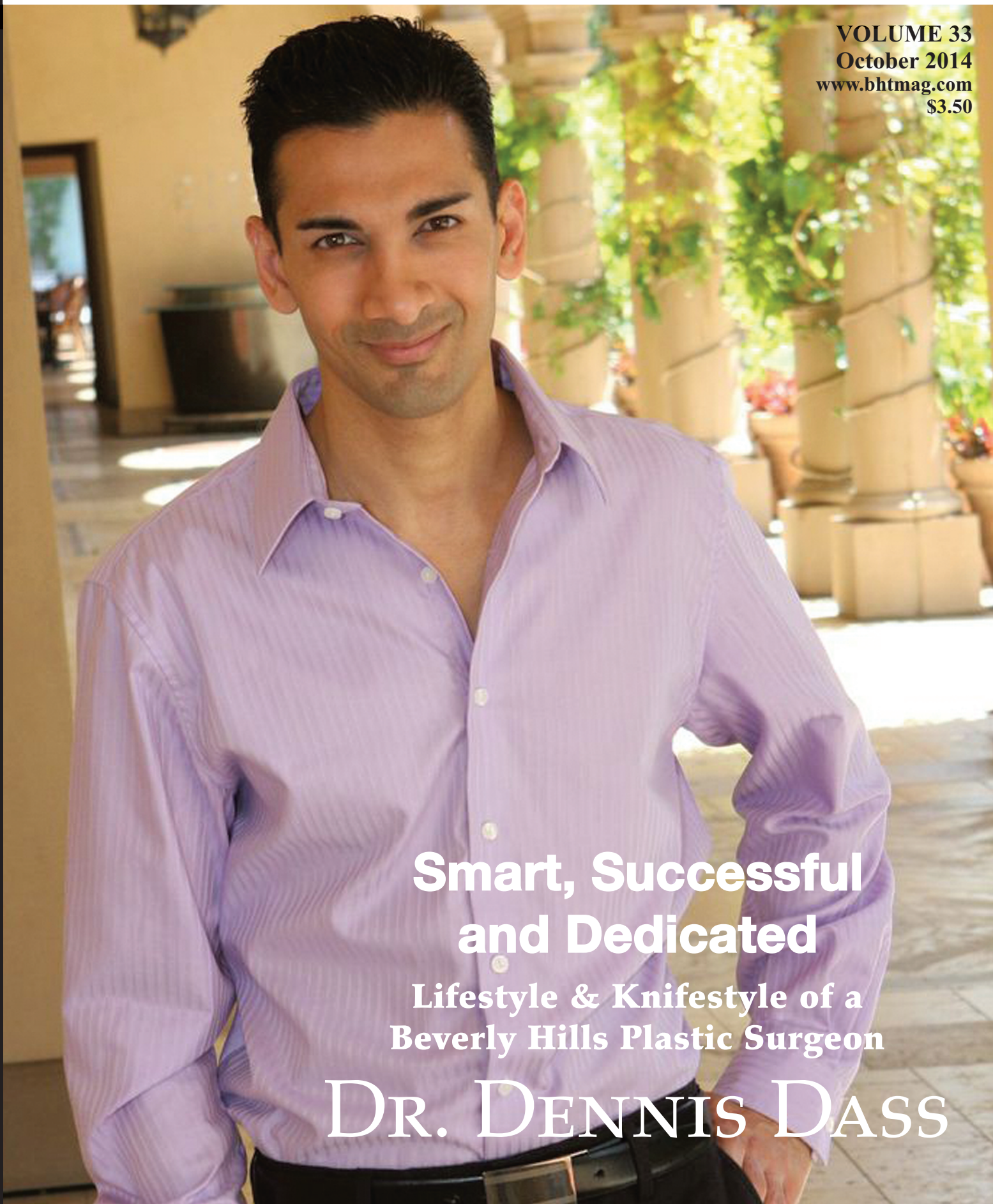


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The Road To Shine

HOW TO BE HAPPY EVEN WHEN LIFE IS CRAPPY

By Laurie Gardner



“Think like a Spaniard. In Spanish, “esperar” means both to wait and to hope. Instead of trying to control specific outcomes and timing, have faith in ‘this or something better.’”

Happiness is a big buzzword these days, but what exactly does it mean? For me, happiness isn't the temporary high we get from drinking a few glasses of wine, or even the pride we may feel for a couple weeks after earning a prestigious award. True happiness is more lasting.

WHILE happiness sometimes shows up as wahoo! elation, happiness can also be a deeply grounded sense of peace.

Here is my “elevator pitch” definition:

Happiness is an inside job. To be fully happy, make sure that what you do, whom you're with, and where you live match who you really are.

As I thought about my life and experiences of my coaching clients, it struck me that happiness seems especially elusive for highly-successful people. For starters, we tend to be perfectionists who set impossible standards. So, therefore, we are rarely happy with our own or others' performances — be it work colleagues or loved ones. Many of us were also “trained” quite well to criticize and look for flaws, which can make it difficult to see the positive in life. Also, most successful people are high-achievers. Certainly not a bad trait in and of itself, but when we remain “externally” focused for too long — especially after we have achieved our goals, a let down or inner emptiness can follow making us aware of the fact that we still aren't happy. On the other hand, if we don't achieve our goals, we may feel like “failures” rather than recognizing the valuable lessons we learned along the way. By always reaching for “the next thing” our attention is always focused on the future, rather than on the here and now. Lastly, movers and shakers like to be in control. Major life changes such as loss of employment, change in relationship status, and relocation are especially stressful and difficult for us to handle and adjust to.

Suggestions: How To Be Happy Even When Life Is Crappy

As a freedom-loving Sagittarius, I had explored most of the world before I turned 30. One of the things I found fascinating was that virtually every country has an expression that means, “*Life is short; don't waste it.*” Yet while most of us agree that life is a precious gift, too many of us settle for less: We work in jobs we hate; stay in unfulfilling relationships; settle for less than ideal health; and live where we don't feel at home.

WHY DO WE DO THESE THINGS?

This was a burning question to myself when I ran off to the New Mexico desert alone and fasted on a vision quest for a week. (No... I didn't ingest drugs — just water.) As I sat overlooking a spectacular painted canyon in 108-degree heat, a book came pouring out into my leather journal titled —

The Road to Shine. **Regarding macro-level happiness: what we want to do and be in this life — here are some realizations that came to me from downtime alone in the desert:**

- Settle schmettle. Life is too short not to live fully.
- Shine in sequence. To live your passion and purpose, first clean up the deeper stuff that is holding you back.
- Peel the onion, baby. Underneath your excuses are your fears. Underneath your fears are what is really preventing you from getting what you want.
- Change is a double-hop. Letting go of what isn't working is only the first step. Sticking it out until you get where you want to go is where true courage lies.
- Transform on your own time. Baby steps are as good as a big leap. Just keep moving forward.
- Quit if it doesn't fit. You know you've found your purpose when you CAN'T not do it.
- Practice “practical passion.” Balance your dreams with your current reality. Even if you can't be a rock star, you can still sing your heart out in the shower.
- You already know. The question is why you're not doing it.
- Why NOT you? You deserve to have it all.

You'll know when it's juiced. When deciding whether to stay in something, wait until you feel bored, detached, and only half in it. At that point, you're done.

● Let it all out. In a society that values specialization, be proud if you have multiple passions and skills. Michelangelo and DaVinci were the rock stars of their day.

● Bottoms up. When you hit rock bottom and can't take it any more, your spirit is ready for you to do what you came here to do.

● Just answer the call. Your vision has been on voicemail for way too long.

My discoveries about micro-level happiness. How to be happier in the moment:

- Celebrate your inner freak. Do or say one “out there” thing daily that you are sure everyone will judge.
- You are what you Tweet. Be aware of your words.
- Choose among the chatter. Of all the voices in your head, follow the calm and non-judgmental one; it's inner wisdom.
- After me, I insist. Your needs are as important as everyone else's. No excuses, no resentment, no apologies, no guilt.
- Drop the wet noodle. Be as gentle and compassionate with yourself as you would be toward someone you love.
- Follow your intuition. If something smells fishy, it likely is.
- Reboot your world view. Deliberately rewire your brain by choosing to interpret things in a more positive way.
- Fight to be free. Fill your heart and empty your mind.
- Lose the schtick. Recognize when you act in an authentic “in the moment way” versus how others expect you to be.
- Check their baggage at the door. You are fully lovable even when others can't fully love you.
- Correction, not rejection. When things don't work out... it's just not where you belong.

After five days, my head and body were lighter from lack of food, I was hallucinating about eating a cheesecake when I got home. As I packed up to go, I jotted down my most powerful realization of all:

- It's time. The world is waiting for your gift. **BHT**

Live fun. Live full. Live free

www.lauriegardner.com

The Road to Shine is available on Amazon and in book stores nationwide.

Laurie Gardner is a 20-year author/expert in personal development and leadership, with multilingual public speaking experience as an international life coach. Laurie spent 15 years reforming America's public schools as a leading pioneer in the charter school movement and served on the board of the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Laurie has a series of online and in-person workshops: “Courageous U.”

