According to Dr Timothy Sharp, psychologist and “Chief Happiness Officer” at Australia’s Happiness Institute, happiness is a choice we make and is the practise of a few positive disciplines each day. Just as wealth isn’t the elimination of debt and health isn’t the resolution of sickness, happiness is more than removing distress

Sharp and US pioneer Dr Martin Seligman (author of Authentic Happiness) are from the school of positive psychology. This field is about working with strengths instead of traditional clinical psychology which focuses on fixing problems. “Positive psychology is like the financial adviser who helps you create significant wealth instead of the accountant* who helps you reduce tax and debt only”

Sharp’s tips for becoming happy cover working with your strengths, creating positive relationships, thinking optimistically, managing your well being and knowing what you can and can’t control

*Our apologies to our accounting colleagues who clearly do more than just this. It is just that this quote had something positive to say about financial advisers, for a change, which made us happy!
CHOOSE to be happy

C larity of goals, direction and purpose
H ealthy living
O ptimism and positive attitude about you and the future
O thers (positive relationships)
S trengths which we leverage
E njoy the moment and have fun and be appreciative

Happiness is not simply one thing. Instead it is a collection of emotions including contentment, satisfaction and fulfilment as well as joy, excitement and pleasure
### What signature strengths can you apply?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wisdom and knowledge</th>
<th>Courage</th>
<th>Humanity and love</th>
<th>Justice</th>
<th>Temperance</th>
<th>Transcendence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curious and enjoy ambiguity</td>
<td>Bravery to take on new challenges</td>
<td>Kind and generous to others</td>
<td>Exciting and loyal team player</td>
<td>Keep your impulses in check</td>
<td>Appreciate beauty and excellence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being an expert</td>
<td>Persevere and finish</td>
<td>You love others and allow yourself to be loved</td>
<td>Fair and equitable and give everyone a go</td>
<td>Look ahead and ensure caution</td>
<td>Aware of good things and express thanks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careful critical thinker</td>
<td>Honest and genuine and down to earth</td>
<td></td>
<td>Organise and lead while keeping good relationships</td>
<td>Modest and don’t seek the spotlight</td>
<td>You are optimistic and future focused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingenious and original problem solver</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strong and coherent spiritual beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotionally intelligent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>You can forgive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bring perspective</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Like to laugh and play</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Instead of the wisdom of self-help books that focus on finding your weaknesses, you should focus on finding your strengths and using them to achieve more. You’ll find yourself more happy. If necessary surround yourself with people who address your weaknesses.

These 24 signature strengths are adapted by Sharp from work by Dr Seligman in Authentic Happiness.
### On relationships

“The likelihood of experiencing true happiness is significantly increased if they are connected to and enjoy the company of others”

Know what your ideal relationship looks like

Happy relationships require 1) individuals to be happy, 2) communicate well and 3) know what you need from relationships

SUPPORT others in your life...

- strengths
- unconditional love
- praise
- positivity
- openness
- respect
- trust

Doing those things that make your loved one happy should make you happy

### Being optimistic

Thinking optimistically is a powerful way to enhance happiness

“Control your thoughts, control your life”

Challenge automatic negative thoughts and “thinking mistakes” which include:

- Over-generalisation, filtering out positive thoughts, thinking in black and white, personalising (and taking unfair responsibility), “catastrophising”, mistaking feelings for fact, mind reading / assuming other’s thoughts, fortune telling and pre-deciding, using “should” and “must statements”, magnify negative and minimise positive information

Develop helpful automatic thoughts

- What’s good about this situation, what did I achieve today, what did I learn ...

Imagine what would your life be like if you were really happy
### Managing your resources

- Eat well (proteins, plants, carbohydrates; less fats, salt and alcohol) and drink plenty of water (many confuse snacking hunger for thirst)
- Exercise is an anti-depressant; it’s simple just do more walking, stairs, play ...
- Peak performance in athletes depends in part achieving adequate rest
- Get plenty of sleep – average person needs 1-2 hrs more; control worry which keeps you up as does evening drinking of caffeine and alcohol
- Take breaks, meditate or “do nothing”
- Manage your mood – anger and negative emotions are physically draining
- Create a happy (work, home) environment

### Control what you can - not what you can’t

- Happiness is elusive if you try to change the unchangeable
- You don’t control the past
- The achievable desire to be happier should not be confused with the unattainable goal of 100% pure happiness, 100% of the time
- Manage time – many of us try to do too much [see our earlier review about Creating time]
- The world is not perfect in part because many people have different views of what perfect is
- Acceptance isn’t giving up, its active coping
Some happy thoughts …

“For every minute you are angry you lose sixty seconds of happiness” - RW Emerson

“Happiness is good health and a bad memory” - Ingrid Bergman

“Some cause happiness wherever they go; others, when they go” - Oscar Wilde

“If you want to be loved, be lovable” - Benjamin Franklin

Happiness is the ultimate purpose of life - Dali Lama

“Attitude determines altitude - the way we think about things largely determines the extent to which we are happy”

“Happy people interpret the world around them in a fundamentally different way, even though the world they live in is the same world in which we all live”

“Some people seem very good at finding problems, others seem to excel at finding solutions – which do you want to be” - Timothy Sharp

Ask yourself how you will know when you are happy?
Ask yourself this often!
### About Professional Wealth

We are an independently owned, personal wealth advisory and money management business serving clients in Sydney and Melbourne.

We focus on professionals and those who value professional service.

We strive to set a new level of professionalism, by:

- providing unbiased high quality advice
- being free to recommend a broad range of investment and insurance solutions
- being remunerated only by our clients, refusing all commissions and rebates
- making education an important part of our offer

### About our Executive Summaries

We regularly review interesting writing on wealth topics that we think our clients will find useful.

Our summaries are of the authors’ views and we encourage you to read their work to learn more.

These should not be considered personal advice as your needs and circumstances will vary.

Please contact us or your personal advisor to explore further how you can **Make Work Optional™**.

*If you have received this from a friend and would like to receive future summaries directly, please send us your email address.*