



Michael Senoff's

HardToFind Seminars.com

Expert Interviews On Mind Body & Spirit

University

INTERVIEW SERIES

**What Would Happen If You
Devoted An Entire Year To
Your Happiness?**

One Woman's Happiness Project



Michael Senoff's

HardToFind Seminars.com

Expert Interviews On Mind Body & Spirit

Dear Student,

I'm Michael Senoff, founder and CEO of HardToFindSeminars.com.

For the last five years, I've interviewed the world's best business and marketing minds.

And along the way, I've created a successful home-based publishing business all from my two-car garage.

When my first child was born, he was very sick, and it was then that I knew I had to have a business that I could operate from home.

Now, my challenge is to build the world's largest free resource for online, downloadable audio business and health related interviews.

I knew that I needed a site that contained strategies, solutions, and inside information to help you operate more efficiently.

I've learned a lot in the last five years, and today I'm going to show you the skills that you need to survive.

It is my mission, to assist those that are very busy with their careers.

And to really make my site different from every other audio content site on the web, I have decided to give you access to this information in a downloadable format.

Now, let's get going.

Michael Senoff

Michael Senoff

Founder & CEO: www.hardtofindseminars.com

Copyright Notices

Copyright © 2001 - 2014 by JS&M Sales & Marketing Inc

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, mechanical or electronic, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the Publisher. Requests for permission or further information should be addressed to the Publishers.

Published by:

Michael Senoff
JS&M Sales & Marketing Inc.
4978 Gaylord Drive
San Diego, CA 92117
858-234-7851 Office
858-274-2579 Fax
Michael@michaelsenoff.com
<http://www.hardtfindseminars.com>

Legal Notices: While all attempts have been made to verify information provided in this publication, neither the Author nor the Publisher assumes any responsibility for errors, omissions, or contrary interpretation of the subject matter herein.

This publication is not intended for use as a source of legal or accounting advice. The Publisher wants to stress that the information contained herein may be subject to varying state and/or local laws or regulations. All users are advised to retain competent counsel to determine what state and/or local laws or regulations may apply to the user's particular situation or application of this information.

The purchaser or reader of this publication assumes complete and total responsibility for the use of these materials and information. The Author and Publisher assume no responsibility or liability whatsoever on the behalf of any purchaser or reader of these materials, or the application or non-application of the information contained herein. We do not guarantee any results you may or may not experience as a result of following the recommendations or suggestions contained herein. You must test everything for yourself.

Any perceived slights of specific people or organizations is unintentional.

What Would Happen If You Devoted An Entire Year To Your Happiness? One Woman's Happiness Project

Gretchen Rubin, author of *The Happiness Project: Or, Why I Spent a Year Trying to Sing in the Morning, Clean My Closets, Fight Right, Read Aristotle, and Generally Have More Fun*, says she wasn't an unhappy person when she started her Happiness Project. Like a lot of people, she just got to a point where she realized her life wasn't going to change unless she started changing it.

So she bought just about every self-help book she could find on happiness, and decided to try the different suggestions for an entire year to see which ones brought improved happiness into her life. And in this audio, you'll hear all the many things she tried during her journey, what worked, what didn't, and exactly what she recommends.

You'll Also Hear...

- A shocking statistic: One in five people are on anti-depressants – and the “non-medicated” suggestions to try that could help instead
- Why taking risks is always good for happiness (but not necessarily the bungee-jumping kind of risks)
- If money can't buy happiness, why are rich people statistically happier than poor people? (A quick look at this little-known fact and how to use its underlying principles to bring happiness into your own life, no matter how much you make)
- Real help for shy people who let fear hold them back
- The happiness suggestions that actually annoyed Gretchen, and a quick self-assessment you can do that might let you know ahead of time which happiness strategies you'll respond to the best
- Can clutter really be the cause of your unhappiness? And the “one-minute” rule that could help you instantly feel better
- Do the cliché happiness strategies really work (like making gratitude your attitude, helping others, exercising more, and living in the moment)?
- The surprising 3-minute habit you can add to your morning routine that Gretchen says will give your mood an instant boost – that lasts all day long

Most of us never spend enough time assessing our lives to figure out if we're happy, even though that's probably one of the most important things we could be doing for ourselves. Gretchen says, when it comes to happiness, you have to be the one to take control of the areas of your life you're unhappy with because no one

else can. And in this interview, you'll hear how she did that with her Happiness Project and how you can too – one suggestion at a time.

Kris: Hi this is Kris Costello and I've team up with Michael Senoff to bring you the world's best health related interview. So, if you know anyone struggling with their weight, with cancer, diabetes, ADHD, autism, heart disease or other health issues, send them over to Michael Senoff's www.HardToFindSeminars.com.

Today we're talking with Gretchen Rubin author of the *Happiness Project* or *Why I Spent a Year Trying to Sing in the Morning, Clean My Closets, Fight Right, Read Aristotle and Generally Have More Fun*. Gretchen, thank you so much for joining us today.

Gretchen: Thank you, I'm very happy to be here.

Kris: You have just a fascinating new book here on the *Happiness Project*. This inspiration came to you one day in New York City on a bus. Is that right?

Gretchen: That's right. I was stuck on the city bus that was moving very slowly in the traffic because it was raining. I had one of those rare moments for reflection that we don't often get in the craziness of everyday life. I asked myself, "What do I want out of life anyway?" I thought, I want to be happy but, I realized I didn't spend any time thinking about whether I was happy or how I could be happier. In a flash, I decided to do a *Happiness Project*. The very next day, I went out and got a huge pile of books and starting researching.

Kris: Your image of seeing a gal standing on the corner that looked just like you with the stroller and the cell phone that was really interesting because not many of us have done that where we catch a glimpse of someone and say, "Oh my goodness. That's me."

Gretchen: That's me. I think that it's part of being an adult. Sometimes you have this recognition when you think, "Wow, I'm a grown-up and my life is the way that it's going to be unless I do something to change it." You realize that you are what you are and if there's

something that you want to be different, you really need to take control of that.

Kris: One of the quotes you have in the book is by Robert Lewis Stevenson, it says, "There's no duty we so much under rate as the duty to be happy." That's a great quote. So many people, especially now, 1 out 5 people are on anti-depressants in this country. Tell me more about that quote and what it means to you.

Gretchen: There's something that people I think widely recognize and talk about all the time and an idea that they're very familiar with and that's the idea that there's a great way to make yourself happy and that is to make other people happy. That's absolutely true and that's one of the very nicest things about human nature that one of the best way to make yourself happy is to make other people happy. What I think people don't recognize as clearly is that one of the best ways to make other people happy is to be happy yourself. It turns out that happy people are more interested in social problems and the problems of other people. They're more altruistic, they give away more money, they volunteer more, they have the emotional where-with-all too worry about other people. When you're less happy, you tend to be more defensive and isolated and preoccupied with your own problems.

When Robert Lewis Stevenson said that we have a duty to be happy, I think he is getting at this idea about it's by working on being happy yourself that in many ways you equip yourself to worry about the happiness of other people. I think sometimes people present it as a false choice. Either you worry about yourself and you're very self-centered or you worry about other people but, in fact, there's no choice. They work together and they go in a circle. It's not selfish to want to be happier. These happy people end up behaving in a less selfish way.

Kris: When you started out with the *Happiness Project*, did you have a sense of you felt unhappy with your life or where were you on the happiness level?

Gretchen: The thing is I was pretty happy. Around the world, if you ask people, "Are you pretty happy?" most people say they're either pretty happy or very happy. I was pretty happy. One of things that I wanted to do with my *Happiness Project* was I wanted to do a better job of appreciating the happiness that I had. I felt like it was too easy to take things for granted and to get distracted by petty irritations or minor annoyances and really lose sight of the fact that I really had so much to be happy about. One of the things that I wanted to do with my *Happiness Project* was really to discipline myself to be much more mindful of that.

Kris: How did you do that?

Gretchen: One thing I did was keeping a Gratitude Journal which is something that a lot people do and works for a lot of people. There are a lot of studies saying that writing down three things that you're grateful for a day will really boost your happiness. Other studies suggest that you're better off just doing that twice a week. I did not respond well to a Gratitude Journal. I did not find that to boost my gratitude. I was kind of annoyed by that practice. Many people love it.

What I do instead, every time I sit down at my computer which is something that I do many, many times during the day, I try to take a moment and think how happy, how lucky I am for my ordinary life. I use that as a way to remind me to have thoughts of gratitude. That for me works better.

Part of the *Happiness Project* is you really have to think about yourself and what works for you and the kind of things that appeal to you and kind of things that work with your nature. Not every strategy works as well for every person so, you have to think about yourself and maybe do a little bit of experimenting to figure out what the right angle is for you.

Kris: It's an individualized kind of thing?

Gretchen: Yes, because you can only build a happy life on the foundation of your own nature so, you really have to think about who you are. With resolutions, one thing I've noticed is that some people do

not like to say no to themselves and they don't do well with resolutions that are "no" resolutions. They don't like to hear things like, "No gossiping or no nagging or no drinking or things like that." To me, I don't mind saying no to myself. It doesn't bother me but, I see that some people really resist that. If you're one of those people, you're better off trying to find ways to frame your resolutions so that you feel like you're doing something positive like, "I'm going to eat more fruits and vegetables," rather than telling yourself that you're going to cut out on fried foods. Again, it's just a question of knowing what works better for you, what kind of person you are.

Kris: Right and I think that a lot of us have that defensive reaction to "no" stemming way back to the early two's, right? A few of the things that I want to talk about in the *Happiness Project*, your new book, you talk about aiming higher. What do you mean by that?

Gretchen: One of the things is to have a big vision for yourself and to push yourself. It's very easy to want to stay with the familiar and the things that you feel like you're good at but, studies show (I really have come to believe that this is absolutely true), people are happier when they do new things and when they challenge themselves. It can be frustrating and intimidating and unpleasant sometimes to push yourself, to aim higher, to have a bigger vision for yourself but a lot of happiness comes from this and being willing to put yourself at risk a little bit.

Kris: Risk taking is an important part of the happiness equation?

Gretchen: It's not risk taking like sometimes people will think, "I don't want to go bungee jumping or I'm not the kind of person who likes to go camping." For me, risk taking meant starting a blog. It was something I didn't know how to do. It felt very scary and intimidating for me. I felt exposed so, to me that was a risk. Taking a risk to you could be if you are a shy person maybe taking an art class would feel risky to you. You would feel intimidated and challenged by that but you've always wanted to take an art class. That would be a good way to take a risk.

You have to think again very carefully about yourself and what makes you happy and the kind of risk that one person would embrace might be very different from you but, you would still benefit from doing something to push yourself.

Kris: We're glad you started that blog. Where can our listeners find that blog if they want to find it?

Gretchen: It's www.Happiness-Project.com.

Kris: Great and you do a blog on happiness in general or everything in the book?

Gretchen: Again, it's an account of everything that I'm learning and thinking about and hearing. Six times a week, I post something about happiness whether it's a little interesting fact from the science. Recently, a friend of mine told me five tips that somebody gave her to avoid an office affair so, I thought that was a good thing to start a conversation. It's all kind of stuff about how to be happier.

Kris: Was there anything that surprised you about happiness while you were writing the *Happiness Project*?

Gretchen: I was very surprised by this idea that novelty and challenge bring happiness because I really didn't think that would be true for me. I love novelty and mastery. When I started my blog, I expected to do it for a couple weeks and then to leave it and I would decide that novelty and challenge weren't things that made me happy but, I did a complete 180 on that.

Another thing that surprised me was that the laws of happiness are kind of like the laws of science. They are very consistent. If you go through time and you will see the same things being brought up over and over again. There's no really great new wisdom here because happiness is too important and people have been thinking about it for too long. It's very interesting to see things like social relationships. Someone like Aristotle talked about the importance of friendship to happiness but then the scientific studies right now are completely saying one of the very key elements to happiness is strong relationships with other

people. You see the same ideas coming up over and over again sometimes in different language or framed in different ways but it's very interesting to see the consistency.

Kris: One of the things you talk about is reading Aristotle and what kinds of things did you find out that Aristotle had been writing about happiness that is still relevant today?

Gretchen: Just that happiness is something that we all want.

Kris: You also talk about in the *Happiness Project* the importance of love. What's that got to do with it?

Gretchen: I don't think it's going to come to a big surprise that love is really very, very important to happiness and people who have loving relationships in their life are happier than people who don't. Again, this is not new wisdom. This is something that is very apparent to everybody because it's the common experience of mankind.

One of the things that really struck me as I was doing my *Happiness Project* is here's my husband. He's the person I've chosen to spend my life with. He's the love of my life. I had this sort of crazy falling in love with him the minute I see him kind of thing and yet, and that I've been with him for so long, it's so easy to take him for granted or it's so easy not to extend to him the kind of thoughtfulness or consideration that I do to people who are less important to me. One of the things I really wanted to focus on was really quitting nagging and not expecting my husband to shower me with praise for everything I did, (I love getting gold stars and getting a lot of recognition for everything that I do) and to give proofs of love and to do little things to show my love and to show consideration and thoughtfulness.

One of my favorite resolutions is "Kiss more, hug more, touch more." Studies show that people who hug more and touch more are happier and I haven't seen any studies about kissing but I venture to say that more kissing makes people happier. So, things like this to really remind yourself, if you have a relationship like that of how important it is and also my love for my children. I wanted to expect more of myself as a mother, to

be more patient and more light-hearted and not to snap as much and to stay calmer and to have a more playful side. A lot of my resolutions were aimed at changing the atmosphere of my household in that way.

Kris: For more interviews on health, mind, body and spirit go to Michael Senoff's www.HardtoFindSeminars.com.

Right and just being more aware of things it sounds like. I've heard that advice too with relationships where it's so easy to just take someone for granted. I've heard actually as you would treat a friend and I think that's good advice.

Gretchen: This is one of the things I noticed. We had people over and I said, "Would you like something to drink? Would you like something to drink? Would you like something to drink?" Then, I just walk off without asking my husband. I thought, "Come on. That's not nice." You really want to extend to them the kind of courtesy that you would to somebody that you're not married to.

Kris: Right and one of the things too is that money and happiness is so connected and mixed up for so many people. I just interviewed Marci Shimoff, the Happy for No Reason gal, wonderful gal. She talked about how people that win the lottery, shortly after they win, they're back down to their level of unhappiness that they were at before, things like that. Why is money and happiness so mixed up?

Gretchen: Lottery winners are a little bit of an exception. You can't go by lottery winners because what happens to them and money is very unusual and that is part of why they don't get more happiness out of it. But for most people, the connection between money and happiness has a lot to do with what they decide to do with their money because money can't buy you happiness but if you spend it wisely, money can buy many things that do contribute quite a bit to happiness. Strong relationships to other people build happiness. So, if you use your money to do things like go to a college reunion or to go visit your sister who you don't see very often or to throw a party those kind of things will probably add to your happiness a lot. If you just use your money

to buy a new chair, that chair probably isn't going to do that much for you.

I have a crazy expensive blender which, if it just sat on my counter because I thought, "Oh, I want to buy a fancy blender and show off," it wouldn't do anything for my happiness. But, I use a blender every single day and every single day that I use my blender, I think, "Oh my gosh. I love my blender. It's so great to have such a good blender." So to me, actually having a really good blender adds a lot to my happiness. For somebody that cooks all the time, really wonderful knives could be a great thing or for somebody who gardens all the time might love to have a really expensive gardening implement. You have to think about how you would spend the money that would be meaningful to you. Just buying stuff doesn't really make people happy.

Usually people are made happier with experiences than they are with possessions, things like pets. Everyone who has a pet complains about how expensive it is to have a pet and yet, they get enormous happiness from their pet. A lot of it has to do with, what are you spending your money on? Are you making choices that are going to further your happiness? Spending more to go to a gym that's a little more convenient so you actually go instead of the gym that's a little bit too far away so you never end up going, that would be a good thing to spend your money on. Could you be happy without that? You certainly could but often if you spend it wisely, money can contribute to your happiness.

Kris: Are there different happiness levels for people with money versus without?

Gretchen: It's very consistent. People who have more money are happier.

Kris: Okay and more money, where's the level, more than \$30,000 a year?

Gretchen: I don't remember exactly where it started but I think it was under \$30,000 or under \$25,000 and then it went up by \$15,000 increments and it just goes pretty steadily up.

Kris: I seem to recall \$100,000 seemed to be the magic number there. I remember reading that.

Gretchen: I don't think the study went above \$100,000. I don't think it made distinctions above that level.

Kris: What else do you want to talk about?

Gretchen: Oh, I know, clutter. One of the things that have really surprised me as I've been talking to people about happiness is that for most people outer order contributes to inner calm. By getting control of their clutter and cleaning up their environment, getting rid of things that don't work or don't fit or they don't have a place, really gives people a happiness boost. In fact, the boost that they get is quite disproportionate to what you would think it ought to be because; really having a messy coat closet in the scheme of life is not a big deal. Yet, over and over people say to me, "Oh my gosh, I got the biggest jolt of happiness. I cleaned this out. I cleaned that out. I cleaned out my frig. I cleaned out my garage." It seems that for whatever reason it is in people's psychology, you really get a very disproportionate boost from creating order in your environment. You can just do it one drawer at a time, one corner of your office at a time. Don't let yourself get overwhelmed but I've been surprised by how much people do seem affected by that.

Kris: That's interesting. I just color-coordinated my closet and it's so funny the psychological effect it has. I look at it and say, "That is so cool, color-coordinated clothing all lined up. That's so not me. I love it."

Gretchen: There's just something about bringing order to disorder. It's very physical. It's very tangible. A lot of times people end up giving away things to people who can use them so then, that makes them happy. They get rid of a lot of trash. There's nothing like getting rid of trash out of your house. Feeling like you have more room, most of us feel crowded and cramped. It's a great way, especially if you're really down and you need to give yourself a quick fix, it's a great thing to do.

Kris: In the *Happiness Project*, you talked about how you attacked it. Can you share with us how you dealt with clutter?

Gretchen: One of the things that I followed that a lot of people have mentioned as something that has been useful to them is something called "the one-minute rule." "The one minute rule" says that if you can do something in less than a minute, you have just go ahead and do it. If you can read a letter and throw it away, if you can hang up your coat, if you can put a dish in the dishwasher, you should just go ahead and do it. The results of "the one minute rule" is the layer of little tiny nagging tasks just drops away. That just makes you feel less overwhelmed and less drained by all these little things.

Another thing is I spent about 10 or 15 minutes every night doing the "evening tightie-up". That's not cleaning, it's just putting books on shelves, putting magazines away, putting clothes away. This way, when you wake up in the morning, everything is just a little more serene and you don't have that crazy feeling of, "I need to run around and do a million things before I leave the house."

Somebody just told me this wonderful rule (I haven't done it myself but I thought it was a great rule), she said she lets herself buy new clothes but she doesn't let herself buy new hangers. So, she has to always maintain the same number of hangers. That's the way that she manages keeping the right number of things in her closet. That was a very good rule.

Kris: Yes, that's very clever. How about office clutter, I know that a lot of people struggle with that one.

Gretchen: One of the things to do is to ask yourself, "Do I really need to keep this?" A lot of times, people spent time dealing with paper or filing things or worrying about where things should go or letting them just sit on the corner of their desk for even years at a time without asking themselves, "Do I really need this? Can I just toss this?" The first question you always want to say to yourself is, "Can I just get rid of this?" because if you don't need to keep it, get it out. If you only have to have one little drawer of files, you're going to be a lot happier than if you have ten big

drawers of files even if they are very well organized. A lot of things people just keep out of habit. They don't need to keep them.

Another thing is to really work on your email in-box. All of us are totally overwhelmed by email and to make sure if you get on a mailing list you don't want to be one, unsubscribe right away. If you have defaults set so that you're notified when certain things happen but you don't really care about being notified, take a few minutes and turn that off. It seems like, "What difference does it make? It only takes me a second to delete that" but, having that feeling like, "Oh my gosh, I have so many emails coming at me," just makes you feel overwhelmed. So, it's worth a little investment of time to just stop those things from coming to you at all.

Kris: Right, kind of preplanning, proactive.

Gretchen: You have to stay on top of it because stuff just keeps coming and coming and coming and you have to look for the unsubscribe button or go back into those account settings and change them so you're not getting all the notifications.

Kris: We've talked a little bit about the most surprising things with the *Happiness Project* that you discovered. What are some of the things that you can recommend to people? There's probably people out there that are really struggling not feeling happy with the stress of this economy things like that. What are some simple things that they can do to just get themselves up and going and feeling a little more happy?

Gretchen: One of the great places to start, even though this sounds ridiculously simple (it's especially important when you're facing a big happiness challenge like worrying about your job) is to get enough sleep. Many people don't get enough sleep and you think you're basically fine but it really, really backs up on you and you're just not going to feel as good as you are if you were going to be well-rested. If every morning you're being jolted out of a dead sleep by your alarm and you have to drag yourself out of bed, try to get more sleep. I know that the end of the day for a lot of people is their fun time and that's when they're doing what they

feel like doing and so, it's hard to turn off the light but especially if you're feeling very stressed out. Sometimes when you're under a lot of pressure, you sleep late in the morning, you stay up late at night, you're not in your usual routine but you really need to get that sleep. It's going to keep your immune system strong. It's just going to give you that feeling of energy that you need to face a big challenge.

Same thing, get a little bit of exercise. This is not going to the gym for an hour. This is not training for a marathon. If you just go out for a 10-15 minute walk outside every day, you're going to feel a lot better. Most people that I've talked to who are regular long-term exercisers, if I say to them, "Why do you keep exercising?" the reason that they give is they say, "It's what keeps me calm and cheerful." They do it to manage their moods, not really because of any physical effect that they talk about; it's much more the mental effect. If you go outside and get a little bit of a walk, you're going to give yourself energy and you're also going to feel calmer. So, it's a good combo, the calming/energizing combo.

A lot of people think they're going to feel more tired if they exercise but in fact, if you have moderate exercise, you're going to feel more energetic and that effect is especially true for people who are sedentary. Plus, people who have trouble sleeping sleep better. They go to sleep faster and they stay asleep better if they get some exercise. So, if you're having trouble sleeping maybe you need to get a little bit more exercise. These things working together can do a lot to just give you the basis in your body to face that big challenge because happiness can seem very transcendent and very abstract but if you just start with your body, that's a very good place to get you going.

Then little things like make your bed in the morning. People always say to me that that is such a helpful resolution to them. I don't know why. It's sort of like cleaning your closets. It doesn't seem like it would make such a big difference but over and over, people have told me that that really helps them. These are little things.

See people, introverts too; get a boost out of seeing people. Extroverts and introverts alike get a boost from being with other people. So, sometimes if you're facing a big happiness challenge, you kind of want to isolate yourself, you don't feel like dealing with people, you don't feel like making plans, you don't feel like showing but, if you really force yourself to do it, you're going to feel better. You're going to get a boost just from being with other people.

Kris: If people want to find out more about your work, where can they find you?

Gretchen: On my blog, www.Happiness-Project.com. I write six days a week about being happier and there's lots of information there about how to do your own happiness project too and that's www.Happiness-Project.com.

Kris: Great and they can probably just Google *Happiness Project* in a pinch too and come up with quite a bit on you too.

Gretchen: That's right. That's probably the easier way. They'll get to it.

Kris: Thank you so much for joining us. We look forward to hearing more about your future projects.

Gretchen: Thank you so much.

Kris: That's the end of our interview and I hope you've enjoyed it. For more great health related interviews got to Michael Senoff's www.HardtoFindSeminars.com.