

Introduction: Welcome to the Enchanting Lawyer Podcast. The show that walks you step by step to improving strategies you can use today to grow your business. We show you how being kind, useful and, of course, enchanting will bring you more clients and build a thriving community. Now here's your host from sunny San Diego, Jacob Sapochnick.

Jacob: Hello everybody, this is Jacob Sapochnick with Enchanting Lawyer Podcast. This is a show where we interview the most inspiring entrepreneurs and business people from all over the world who share their ideas and stories with us and make us better at what we do.

Today, I have a very special and exciting guest. As you know, we advocate the enchanting way. This is the Enchanting Lawyer show where we promote happiness and kindness and just be more flexible. If we apply happiness in our life, amazing things can happen.

Today I have Gretchen Rubin who is one of the most thought provoking and influential writers on habits and happiness. Her next book, *Better Than Before*, is about how we change our habits. One of my favorites is *The Happiness Project* and *Happier at Home* were both instant New York Times Bestsellers and the Happiness project spent of more than two years on the bestseller list including the number one.

I just recently learned that Gretchen is recovering attorney. She clerked for Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. She was the editor-in-chief of the Yale Law Journal. This is amazing because we have people who listen to my show and they are attorneys and people that don't want to be attorneys anymore and I think this is great to have Gretchen in the show. Welcome. I'm very excited to have you here.

Gretchen: I'm very happy to be talking to you.

Jacob: Excellent.

Gretchen, I feel that—and I just mentioned to you before the show that happiness and kindness and just making sure this is kind of important part of our life is really important to me. I'm curious why you find it to be so important and why don't you tell our listeners a bit more about the Happiness Project where you spend a year testing and trying to apply happiness to your life. I'm very curious about this.

Gretchen: Well, I got the idea—I was finishing up my biography of JFK and I was in a city bus stuck in the pouring rain and I had one of those rare opportunities for reflection that you don't often get in the tumult of everyday life. I looked out the window and I felt "Well, what do I want from life anyway?" and I thought "I want to be happy!" but I realized I didn't spend any time thinking about whether I was

happy or if I could be happier and the thought struck me. “Well, I should have a happiness project,” That was the phrase that I thought.

It’s very common for me, you know, ever since I was a little girl to get very interested in something to do with a ton of research just for my own fun. I instantly became interested in happiness. I ran to the library the next day, got a giant stack of books and started reading. Initially, it was just for me. It was just for my own happiness project but I realized that the material was so rich and fascinating and sort of so limitless and all the things I wanted to try and learn more about. I thought, “Wow, maybe this should be my next book.” And so that’s when I decided that not only would I do my own happiness project but that I would actually use it as the subject for my next book.

Jacob: Right. And, you know, people touch happiness and these ideas very often in different ways. But I’m curious to know, after spending a year of doing this and trying it on yourself, can you share with our listeners perhaps one or two secrets to actually being happy if it’s even possible?

Gretchen: Well, I think if you were going to say what is the secret to happiness, I think you can answer that question in a couple of different ways depending on the framework that you use to think about it. Now, ancient philosophers and contemporary scientists would agree that one answer—maybe the best answer—is relationships and that to be happy we need to be able to have intimate connections with other people that, you know, overtime we need to be able to confide, we need to feel like we belong, we need to be able to give and get support. If you look at the people who are happier they tend to have more strong relationships in their life. So, any time you’re thinking about how to spend your precious time, energy, or money, something that deepens or broadens your relationships is a good bet.

I think another way to answer that question, depending on how you think about it, is that the key to happiness is self-knowledge. Because I truly believe that we can build a happy life only on the foundation of our own nature, our own interest, and our own values. The more you know yourself the more you can bring your life into reflection of what’s true for you. It sounds easy because you’re like, “Well, of course I know myself. I just hang out with myself all day long,” but actually it’s easy to get distracted by, you know, either not paying attention, or the way you wished you were, or the way you feel like you ought to be, or the way other people expect you to be and not really face up and think through what’s true about ourselves.

At times it’s a little sad to admit what’s true about yourself. Maybe sometimes we wish we were different in certain ways. But you really have to know who you are in order to build the life that’s going to be right for you.

Jacob: Absolutely. I mentioned before that you're an attorney; did you practice law for a while?

Gretchen: Well, I clerked on the 2nd circuit for Pierre Leval and then on the Supreme Court for Sandra Day O'Connor. And then I went to work for like a year for Reed Hundt when he was the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission. And in that job I sort of wasn't—I never know whether to say I was practicing because in a way I kind of had to be a lawyer to do what I was doing but on the other hand I wasn't really acting as a lawyer. So, it's kind of, sort of being a lawyer.

Jacob: The reason why I asked that is because we all know that the legal profession is one of those professions that—the most unhappy people, unfortunately. There are many reasons for it: the stress, the dealing with the clients, the constant struggle, fighting but I'm curious, while you were doing this, did you feel happy working in this new career?

Gretchen: Yeah, I was pretty happy. I mean had these amazing experiences so I don't regret it at all. It's funny, people point to a lot of different reasons why lawyers aren't happy being lawyers but I think that they often overlook what I think is the most obvious point: having done this – made this mistake myself. Which is I think for a lot of people law is a default choice. They don't go to law school because they think, "Wow! I really, really want to be a lawyer," and then, "Oh boy! Now I'm a lawyer and it's making me unhappy." They go because they think things like I thought which is, "I'm good at research and writing, I'd probably be good at law school." "It's a great option," "It'll keep my options open," "I can always change my mind later," "It's a great preparation for a lot of different things."

And the fact is people who become sound engineers don't become sound engineers unless they want to be sound engineers. But a lot of people become lawyers because they really haven't—again, this idea of self-knowledge—they haven't really thought of what it is they want and so they become lawyers. And then it turns out they're not very happy being lawyers. But it's not the problem of the law, it's a problem of the fit. There was no reason to think they're fitted to it.

One of the things that was very striking to me when I was clerking on the Supreme Court was that for the most part these people loved the law. I mean they wanted to talk about law during our lunch hour, they wanted to read law journals on the weekend, they were reading books about legal history and case law and, you know ... They were so enthusiastic about it because that's what they loved. And so for them that's what they wanted, that suited them, that's what they were interested in. It made them very happy.

And so it wasn't a question of the nature of the profession though I think you're right to point out that there are certain aspects of the legal profession that are

maybe more difficult but for some people that's what they want. Fighting all the time for some people is tremendously fun, you know?

Jacob: Absolutely.

Gretchen: A big reason for dissatisfaction in the legal profession is just that people are there who really never wanted to be lawyers particularly in the first place.

Jacob: Right. I think biggest problem with people that are not happy is you expect something to happen and when it's not happening you're very, very disappointed. Before we go to law school, before we take a job, it's all this glamour out there. You're going to be a lawyer, you're going to wear a suit, and you're going to make a lot of money. The reality is that it's a very, very tough profession. Not that many lawyers are making that much money.

The disappointment is now like, "Well, I spent all this money and I'm not happy, how do I get out of this?" This is something that I've always been thinking and people that email me—I get a lot of emails from all these attorneys and like, you know, "I don't want to be an attorney. What else can I do?" Whatever you do you have to set your expectations.

You know, Gretchen, I'm curious. You tried so many things during this year of the happiness project strategies, I'm curious, were there some things that you've done that didn't work for you to make you happy as part of the testing?

Gretchen: In my most recent book, *Better Than Before*, I was working specifically on habits and obviously the point of habits is that we do habits that—you try to create habits that make you happier, healthier and more productive. So, I was sort of doing the same thing again. One of the habits that I had the highest hopes for was meditation. Because, you know, if you read about happiness you often will come across discussion of how meditation is so great for this reason and that reason. It's amazing. And so I thought, "Okay, well ..." I sort of resisted the idea of meditation. I was like the happiness expert who never meditated and sort of prided myself on that. But I thought, "You know what, I really need to give this a shot because for so many people it's really, really helpful." People that I knew and respected were telling me how much benefit they felt they got from it.

And so as a habit challenge I tried to form the habit of meditating. And the fact was I had no trouble forming the habit of meditating but the actual meditating did not work for me. So, that was the habit that I tried that I thought was really going to be a happiness booster, and it just turned out that for me it was just making me kind of more and more frustrated so I gave it up. And then I had to break the habit of meditating because it just wasn't something that was working for me.

Jacob: It's interesting you say that because the mind for this movement is huge right now. People advocate, "If you're not going to do this you're not going to be calm; you're not going to be relaxed." And you mentioned that for you it actually didn't work.

Gretchen: Yeah.

Jacob: I kind of feel a bit the same. I mean I do meditation as part of exercise but I can't do it as just this. I don't want to do it because people are saying you should do it so it's not working for me as well because I guess you know, some brains are wired differently. One thing that I noticed in the book is that you're not advocating for any use of medication or any artificial things but at the same time you don't say that you're against it. So I'm curious to know what kind of things you would use to introduce happiness.

Gretchen: In the book I'm very careful to say. I think there's happiness, ordinary unhappiness, and depression. I really consider depression to be a 3rd category that is extremely urgent. It's real, it's important, and it needs to be tackled. I absolutely am a believer in people taking medication if that is going to help them manage their depression. But for ordinary unhappiness I think, you know, that's kind of a different thing where it's more about the behaviors and the habits that we form where we can decide the ways that we can add more good things to our life, more positive emotions or decrease the number of negative emotions that we feel. That's sort of outside the question of whether or not you would take medication.

A friend of mine said, "I'm a very happy person who suffers from depression," and I knew exactly what she meant. It's sort of its own thing. But what's been interesting to me since I've written the Happiness Project and also Happier at Home, I've heard from many people suffering from depression who say, "Well, I really consider myself to be a person who suffers from depression, not just ordinary unhappiness, and yet I find that many of the same strategies work for me or help me manage my depression better or help me to be as happy as I can be given what my challenges are." I don't talk about it because it's not something that I write from my own experience, it's not something that I've experienced but I certainly would not say that I don't support it or believe that it's a very important tool for many people.

Jacob: Right. Coming out of depression is a process, there's not one thing, but I think some of the tools that you mentioned can help make it a bit easier and feeling maybe less sad and maybe having some hope. And that's kind of what I like about your approach.

Gretchen: I think one of the things to think—sometimes people talk about happiness like it's this magical land that you just cross the finish line and then you're there.

What does it look like and how do you stay there? It's like this kind of on/off thing. I think it's more helpful for most people to think about being happier to be moving in the right direction. I think for all of us the question is, "Am I as happy as I can be given my nature and my circumstances?" Because, you know, a big part of happiness is hardwired – like 50% is genetic.

And so some people are just naturally are going to go to a Happiness 10 and other people, their high point is going to be like a Happiness 7 or 8 and that's just their nature. And then sometimes we're just in a circumstance that doesn't make us very happy. It wouldn't be appropriate to be happy. It wouldn't be a good life to be happy under those circumstances. But can you be as happy as you can be given what's going on?

It just seems to me, like, we should all try to have what happiness we can have because for most of us – certainly for me and I think for a lot of people – there's a lot of low-hanging fruit. There's a lot of stuff you can do without a lot of time, energy, or money. Once you think about it back to your point about mindfulness, if you think about it and you think, "Well what could I do to be happier? What can I do to get rid of guilt, and anger, and resentment, and boredom?" and "What are the things that are within my reach?" I think most of us can come up with some things that could really make a difference in the experience of everyday life.

Jacob: Right. I totally agree with that. But, you know, one thing that's interesting to me, Gretchen, when you tackle a project like happiness which I think is a very brave thing to do because it's such a big, big thing, I'm curious, what about the critiques that probably had said, "Oh happiness. What do you know about happiness? What does it mean actually to be happy and why would you define it?" How did you tackle those people that during that year they came up to you and said, "Why are you even doing this and how do you know what happiness is?"

Gretchen: Well, it's funny mentioning law. All of us here who are listening, who are lawyers, have happy memory just spending an entire semester arguing about the definition of contract.

Jacob: Oh yeah.

Gretchen: So, we've done that thing. And so I don't even try to define happiness because there's something like 15 academic definitions of happiness. You can spend a lot of time arguing whether is it really contentment, or satisfaction, or bliss, or peace, or joy. I think it's good that the word happiness is loose enough to kind of embrace all these different conceptions of what it means to be happy. And so I don't spend any time arguing about it. I'm like, whatever you want to say it is for you, works for you, I got my own idea.

A lot of times, people who even want to argue with the very idea that a person could be happy. If I say, "Okay, maybe you don't accept that people can be happy but do you think you could be happier if you did this or that?" Usually they're like, "Yeah, well, I think I could be happier." Like they sort of acknowledge that, okay, there are things that make a difference.

You're right. Happiness has kind of a surprisingly bad reputation where a lot of people feel like it's superficial or [unclear 00:16:37] or that happy people are very self-indulgent and pre-occupied with themselves.

But the interesting thing is the research shows—and I think people will see this in their own experience—is that actually happy people are more altruistic. They give away more money, they volunteer more time, they're more likely to help out if a family member, or colleague, or a friend needs a hand. They have better habits, they have better work habits, they make better leaders, and they make better team members. When we're happy we have the emotional whirl with all the turn outward and to think about other people and the problems of the world. When we're less happy we tend to become more defensive and isolated and pre-occupied with our own problems. This idea that happiness is somehow like an illegitimate goal I think is really not borne out by how it really plays out.

Jacob: Absolutely.

One of my favorite quotes – and I believe it's what your quote from the book is – you said, "One of the best ways to make yourself happy is to make other people happy. And one of the best ways to make other people happy is to be happy yourself." This is kind of very powerful.

I think that – we mentioned James Altucher before. I think in his Choose Yourself book and movement, he mentions that if you don't love yourself, if you don't feel good about yourself, you can't help others; you shouldn't even try. To me this is just very powerful because, you know, try to be happy yourself before you can make other people happy.

Do you have any examples about situations like that that you encountered during that year of experimenting the things?

Gretchen: I think it's just something that people often focus on one side of it that they think, "Oh, the important thing is try to make other people happy," but just overlook the idea that it is not selfish and self-indulgent to worry about your unhappiness and that truly, when you're happier, that's how you're going to enable yourself to give more to others. It's interesting, I see this in habits too because, as I said, I talk about this book habits Better Than Before which is all about how people change habits.

Because one of the things I notice is when people talked about happiness often the problem wasn't that they didn't know what would make them happier. They knew they'd be happier if they got more sleep or if they stopped procrastinating an important project or whatever. They knew it so it wasn't like they hadn't figured it out, they just weren't able to follow through. So I became very interested in this question of why is it that sometimes people can change habits and sometimes they can't.

I identified 21 strategies that people can use either to make or break habits, depending on a lot of things. One of the strategies—and it's the most fun strategy. Of all 21 this is the most fun strategy—is the strategy of treats. That's the idea that we should load ourselves with healthy treats because that's how we feel energized and cared for. They need to be healthy treats because you don't want to do something to make yourself feel better that ends up making you feel worse like eating an entire box of chocolate chip cookies or staying up until 3AM watching Mad Man episodes. If you give yourself healthy treats – And again, people worry it seems selfish and self-indulgent, but really those healthy treats give you the energy that you need to look outward, and to think about other people, to keep your good habits, to assume more forbearance and a better sense of humor and more perspective with the people that you work. If you take care of yourself then you're much better able to take care of other people too.

Jacob: Absolutely.

One of the things that you've done on your website, you have the Happiness Project Toolbox. You talk about encouraging people because this is kind of like a movement in a way.

Gretchen: Yes.

Jacob: My question is – let's say if people who are listening to this show, they want to start their own Happiness Project, how can we get started?

Gretchen: Well, as you said I have a website called gretchenrubin.com where I've been writing about happiness and good habits and human nature for 8 years—almost every day for 8 years so there's a lot of stuff there; depending on what you're interested in. [unclear 00:20:44] resource this area where there's things about if you want to get started on your own happiness project, if you want to form a group with other people who are doing happiness projects together, if you want to get ideas about how to change your habits. If you're in a book or discussion group where you want to talk about it with other people, there's just a bunch of stuff there that will help people get started as they think through what they might want to do for themselves.

Jacob: If you would day say – give them one tip if you want to start happiness project, what would be that first step that people need that push?

Gretchen: I think it comes back to this idea of self-knowledge. I think that one of the things that's useful with the happiness project is to really think about yourself and your life and to think "What's missing?" or "What do I want to add to?" I think a great place for many people to start is with energy or with the body because your body—your physical experience always colors your emotional experience. Working on your energy makes everything else easier. So, that's things like getting enough sleep, not letting yourself get too hungry, getting a little bit of movement into your day—not necessarily training for the marathon but just getting up and around to keep your energy high.

One of my favorite strategies about the body from Happier at Home is about turning into really good smells because smell is this ubiquitous part of our experience where we often don't dial into it. It's like this pleasure that it doesn't cost anything, it doesn't take any time, it doesn't have any calories or carbs. You just smell that grapefruit as you walk through the kitchen and it gives you that lift and then you move on. It's just [anodize 00:22:18] to your body. A lot of times people will say, "I feel like I just spent all my time behind a computer, around the phone. I want to connect to my body and my physical experience," and you do that. I think that's a great place to start.

For some people travel might be a really important thing that's missing. For me travel is not important; that wasn't part of my happiness project. For someone else that might be right at the top of their list.

So, part of what's useful is to really – is for each of us to look inside and to say "Well, what's true for me?" you know like with habits. One of the things that I see is that people have very different aptitudes for habits and attitudes for its habits so for some people they want to have a lot of habits. Other people feel differently so you have to think about like what do you want? Is adding these habits going to make you happier? Is it going to make you feel trapped? How do you want to think about it?

It's interesting because I have this podcast now with my sister called Happier with Gretchen Rubin and one of the things that's really interesting as we talk about this is that she's a very different personality from me. I'm kind of an extreme person which maybe you've been able to tell already. But believe me you don't have to be around me for very long before you start seeing that; though I kind of didn't realize it myself. My sister's very different. And as we talk through a lot of the ideas about happiness and good habits I think it's really interesting for listeners to hear not everybody has the same ideas; the same things don't work for everybody.

For her, this is her thing; for me, this is my thing. This is something that is her happiness challenge or her struggle, it's not a struggle for me but I got my own struggles. And then, of course, since we're sisters there's things we have in common too and things we don't let each other get away with. But it's interesting because there is no magic one size fits all solution for happiness or habits. You really have to begin by saying what's true for you.

Morning people, night people. I'm a morning person and my sister's a night person. I can get up early and exercise first thing, that doesn't work for my sister because she can barely get out of bed in time to get to work on time. If you're a morning person you have to think about what's going to make you happy one way, the night person's going to have a very different answer for that.

Jacob: I love that. I'll just share with you in a minute a project I'm starting with a friend of mine. We're starting a little coffee shop right here in San Diego where it's kind of like a coffee bar but it's going to be based on inspiration and quotes that are going to be delivered to the customers in person as opposed to just having it online. The people who are working in the coffee shop, their purpose is to create a minute of happiness the moment they connect with the customer. It's kind of an exciting little project that I'm working on but it was a bit inspired by your journey as well.

Gretchen: Oh, great! Excellent!

Jacob: I'll update you. We're going to launch in 3 weeks.

Gretchen: Oh wow, that's exciting.

Jacob: The idea is to spread happiness in the city and because it's a very small locations we can create a circle of happiness around. We have actually a map where we circled the six locations we're going to be opening in the next 18 months and they're going to be called The Circle of Happiness in the City. So, it's a very interesting project and I'll update you and maybe send you photos you can put on your blog, article about this.

Gretchen: Oh, absolutely. Yeah, put them on my Facebook page.

Jacob: The idea is that people get up in the morning, they walk in the streets and they're grumpy and nobody is talking to them but what happens if somebody is going to brighten your day—even for a minute—and make you happy just a little bit, how's that going to change the rest of your day. We're going to try and experiment that by doing that exactly in the next year within that coffee shop. So, that's my happiness project.

Gretchen: Fascinating. Fascinating.

Jacob: It's thanks to you, Gretchen.

Gretchen: Oh, good.

Jacob: As we come to the end of the show, I would like you to share with our audience first of all the link to the podcast—Do you have a separate blog or it's coming out of the main gretchenrubin.com?

Gretchen: If you go on to gretchenrubin.com you'll see in the top vertical that there's something called podcasts and you can go there to get all the episodes .It's on iTunes, Stitcher, Sound Cloud, all that and it's called Happier with Gretchen Rubin. I really encourage people to check it out; we have so much fun. And then, again, yeah, at gretchenrubin.com there's tons of stuff there on working, and relationships, and all kinds of stuff related to ...

Jacob: And we'll put links to the books as well in the show notes so if anybody wants to get the Happiness Project and the new book, I highly recommend it. So, we'll have links to everything and nobody has to worry about writing anything down.

Gretchen: That's good, that's right. Because you're like walking down the street and you can't pull out your piece of paper.

Jacob: Exactly. That's why we have the show notes.

Gretchen: That's great.

Jacob: Perfect.

Well, Gretchen, I'm very, very happy that you—I'm actually happy, I'm very happy as I was talking to you. I wish you all the best. And I'm definitely going to check out your podcast and I recommend our listeners to do the same.

Gretchen: Thank you. And I can't wait to hear about the fate of the Circle of Happiness. It sounds like it's going to be a fantastic addition to the life in the city.

Jacob The name of the coffee shop is Simon Says Coffee. And the reason its Simon Says because it's going to be a happiness commence throughout the whole 18 months of launch. Like I said, I'll make sure to update you because it may be something of interest to you as well, to write.

Gretchen: Excellent! Excellent! I'll look forward to that. Good luck.

Jacob: Thank you so much, Gretchen, and thank you to our listeners for tuning in every week. Your emails and comments inspire me and make me happy to continue doing this show. We'll see you at our next episode. Thank you so much.

Closing: Thanks for listening. You can find even more resources, including the show notes for this episode, at enchantinglawyer.com. That's www.enchantinglawyer.com.