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Happiness may not be elusive as you think

Northport author to sign copies of new book January 18

By **Elise Pearlman**

Nineteenth century novelist Nathaniel Hawthorne once likened happiness — perhaps the most mysterious, fleeting and mercurial of human emotions — to "a butterfly which, when pursued, is always beyond our grasp."

Yet according to Northport resident Jim Ryan, a motivational speaker and author of [Simple Happiness: 52 Easy Ways to Lighten Up](#) (AuthorHouse), this sought-after emotional state may not be as elusive as we think.

Once a guidance counselor and foreign language teacher in the Bethpage School District, Ryan left the field to become a financial planner in the 1980s, further honing his interpersonal skills as a member and eventual president of the Northport Rotary Club.

Ryan's philosophy on happiness grew out of his philanthropic work for Rotary International and his experience as a counselor at the DWI Alternative Facility in Yaphank. A volunteer since 2000, Ryan developed a 10-week course in personal development which helps male offenders reorient their lives, set positive goals and create a better self-image.

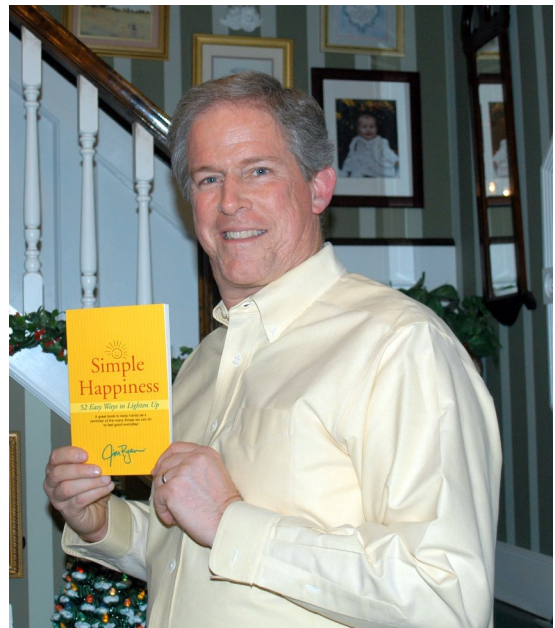


Photo by Alan Pearlman

Having learnt about what he calls the "art of happiness" in the process; Ryan has since delivered speeches on the topic to audiences across Long Island. He said that he wrote his book as a way of reinforcing his spoken message with vivid examples and metaphors.

"Folks are as happy as they want to be," Ryan said, emphasizing that, to a great extent, happiness is a choice. "We become what we think about all day long. Our thoughts do not necessarily have to become our reality," he said, adding that the power lies in hanging on to thoughts that empower us and letting go of those that do not.

For Ryan, the key to changing how we react is awareness of how habitual response patterns make us feel, setting in motion a mechanism for change. It is his belief that "little turns in consciousness" gradually lead to great strides in achieving a better perspective on life.

Metaphorically speaking, everyone's life is "a mansion," full of joy, fulfillment and adventure, Ryan said. "The problem is that we spend most of our lives living in the foyer, experiencing the same things over and over," he said, adding that this course of action allows for little growth or satisfaction.

www.JimRyanTalks.com
866-JIM-RYAN

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Ryan's concrete strategies for achieving fulfillment and reducing the stress in our daily lives include learning to live in the moment, volunteering as a way of expanding our spiritual nature and pursuing our bliss by immersing ourselves in activities that make us feel alive and fulfilled.

Quotes from masters of personal development such as Carl Jung, Deepak Chopra, Mother Theresa, Albert Ellis, and a host of others drive Ryan's message home. Readers will learn how Ryan followed his bliss by stepping out of his comfort zone to jump-start his career as a financial planner.

"If you had asked me back then if I ever thought about writing an inspirational book or becoming a motivational speaker, the answer would have been an emphatic 'no.' But now I find that when new opportunities come my way, I feel the fear and then do it anyway," Ryan said.

One unexpected opportunity that Ryan embraced wholeheartedly was an appearance last September with Monsignor Thomas Hartman and Rabbi Marc Gellman, otherwise known as the God Squad. "I had to think on my feet. It was invigorating but I held my own with these veterans, and I was on the top of my game," Ryan said.

Ryan has been aided in his endeavors by Northport resident Maggie Kalas, who designed the book's cover and served as its content editor. "She has also been the marketing consultant for my professional speaking and my quasi-spiritual coach along the way," Ryan said.

Kalas, who drew on years of experience in sales, marketing and public relations, said that, helping Ryan get his book into print has been a great learning experience for her. Ryan and Kalas came together as they collaborated on a community forum known as "Consciousness in the Courtyard." Kalas, who teaches meditation, said that she marveled about their mutual interest in happiness and joy.

"He wrote down his ideas, and I realized it was a book," Kalas said, adding that she was amazed by the synchronicity of "things that came their way" once they embarked on the project as a team.

Ryan's work is in tune with the current emphasis in psychological research and literature on the characteristics of well-adapted, happy individuals as opposed to those who are dysfunctional. Greg Murphy, Ph.D., the clinical psychologist who wrote the forward to Simple Happiness, pointed out Ryan's approach is particularly akin to a concept of "mindfulness," whereby people are encouraged to abandon "old, ineffective habits" for ones that allow them to tap into "their innate resources of joy and compassion."

Westbury resident Fred Chernow, author of The Sharper Mind, attended one of Ryan's library talks and has been a fan ever since. Chernow said that Ryan's "personal, direct and heartfelt" way of connecting with his audience and his unique "literary voice" is what comes across in the book.

"There is no bombast, no pedantic style, just a friend sharing with another friend some profound secrets he has discovered and now wants to pass on with enthusiasm. It was as if Jim was next to me, telling me some great strategies that worked for him," Chernow said.

For those who would like to hear Ryan's message in person, he will be speaking and signing copies at [Book Revue in Huntington on January 18 at 7:30 pm.](#)

A schedule of Ryan's other speaking engagements is available at www.jimryantalks.com.