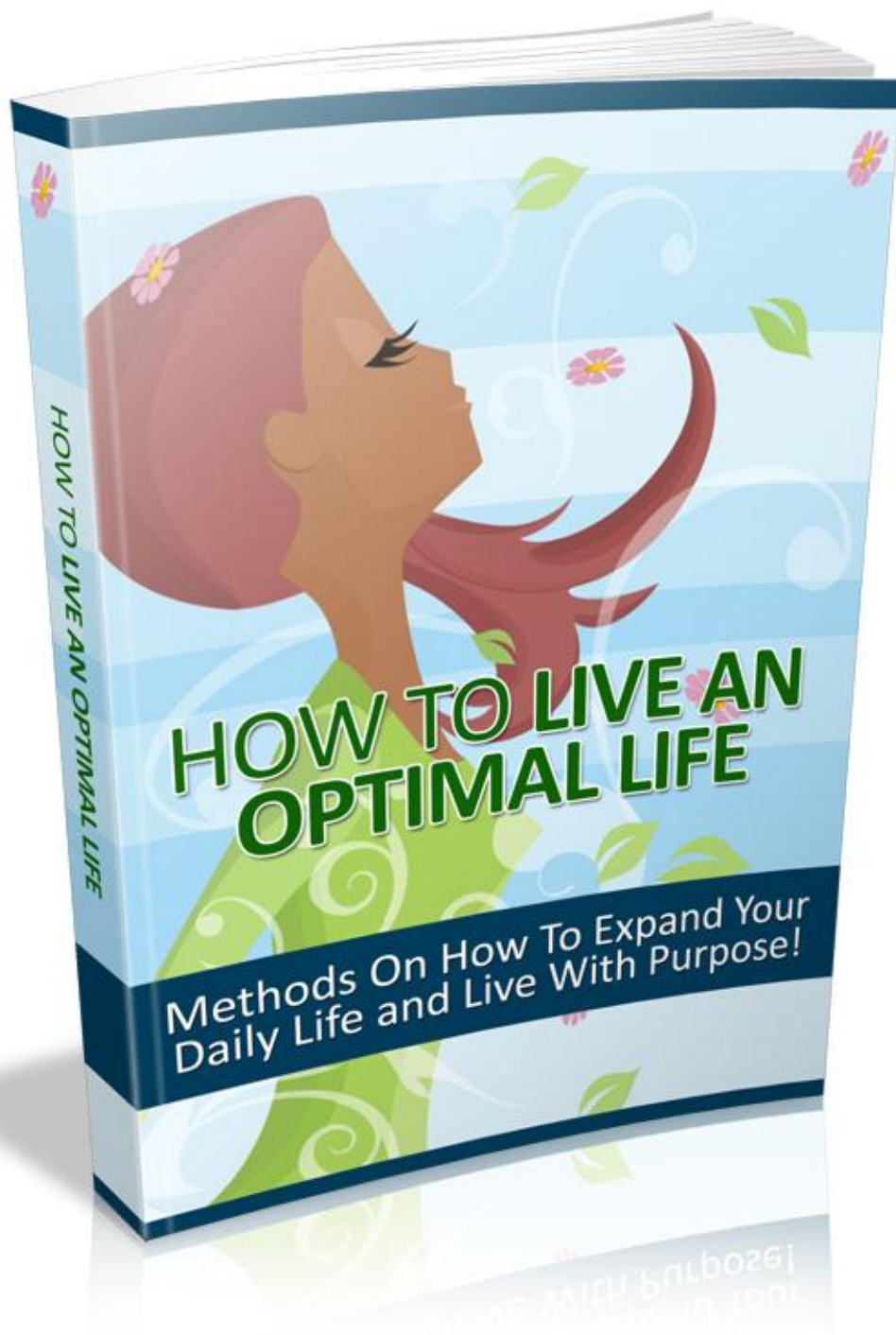




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Introduction

How many people do you know who will state that their lives are optimal? If you look around, you might think that happiness has ceased to exist.

But, if you want to make your life optimal, you have to take things in your own hands. You have to shape your own life.

Here is how you can do that, starting today.

Chapter 1:

What Is an Optimal Life?

Summary

What is an optimal life? Is a life where you everything you need and want an optimal life?

What Is an Optimal Life?

Many people speak about their problems in life. In fact, this is one of the hottest topics of conversations. It doesn't really matter where you meet someone, all it takes is a friendly smile to start pouring out your life's woes to them. Everyone does the same. The result is that no one really knows how happy one is. Since everyone is talking about their miseries, it does seem that no one around is leading an optimal life.

This is where the problem lies. We think that the term 'optimal life' should have a definition. We think that we should be able to peg down someone's life entirely and say, "Ah, now his is an optimal life!" But it doesn't happen that way, does it? You might think that someone with a lot of money or someone with a beautiful wife must have an optimal life. But when you get to know them, you begin to see the great big problems that lie behind this exterior façade of theirs and you realize that their life is not all that hunky-dory as you thought it to be.

There's a great saying I am reminded of here –

If everyone were to throw their problems in a pile, and see everyone else's, they would grab their own right back.

It's true. We think the neighbors are always happier than we are. We think they are leading a more optimal life than we are. But if we were really to sit down and make comparisons, quite likely, we would find our problems to be the least.

So, where are we heading with this? The point I want to make here is that our lives are only as optimal as we want them to be. We have it entirely in our hands how beautiful we want to make our lives. If we want to sit and brood that life is toying with us in every way possible, it is. But if we plan to take things in our hands and not let life jerk us around, it won't.

We have to plan just how much control we want to give our lives.

An optimal life is a very individualistic thing. For us, an optimal life would be one in which we are completely contented and satisfied with whatever we have. It doesn't matter whether we are rich or poor – if we are satisfied with what we have, it is an optimal life that we live.

Chapter 2:

What Do You Need for an Optimal Life?

Summary

We make our own optimal lives. All we need is the right knowledge on how to do that.

What Do We Need for an Optimal Life?

The general notion all across the planet is that you have an optimal life if you have everything. However, it is not what you have that matters; it is how happy you can be with whatever you have. A person earning just \$500 a month has an optimal life if he can survive wonderfully within that and can save too. But even a millionaire is not living optimally if his debts far outstrip his earnings.

So, you see, optimal living is not about money.

What is it about then? Is this about living happily within our family? In a great measure, it is. We are only as happy as our family lives are. Since optimal living is all about contentment, having a pleasant family life becomes one of the essential things for it.

But, again, there are people who have what one might think is the ideal family life – great wife, great kids, etc. – but may still not be happy. Hence, there are a few more things you would need for optimal living. Money and family don't even begin to scratch the surface actually.

The most important thing you need is actually the way you are. Your perspective, your way of thinking, is much more important in deciding whether your life is optimal. You have to condition yourself into thinking that you are living a great life. When your mental balance is perfectly set, you will find that your life really starts taking a turn for the best.

However, that does not mean you should live in poverty and be happy with it. We need the peripherals – we need the money and the love. These are important ingredients for optimal life, but the realization that these are not the only things should also be had early on. A perfect balance of money, health, family and the

right mental spirit will help the most in bringing you toward an optimal life. This is what you need to discover.

Chapter 3:

Striking the Balance between Health and Wealth

Summary

Health is wealth. But in the material world that we live in, we know and understand another reality.

Striking the Balance between Health and Wealth

Health is a very important aspect of human life. It is very true to say that if health is lost, everything is lost. Hence, when we speak about optimal living, this is the first point that we need to tackle. But people understand health in different ways. For some, the absence of any disease spells good health. For some, health means being able to be fit and capable of performing all their tasks without getting spent. For yet others, good health means living longer. Though there are different ways that you may look at it, good health essentially boils down to one thing – *Being able to make your life more productive and hence live a more enriched and optimal life.*

If you give it a thought, wealth is an effect of good health, not otherwise. Only when you are healthy can you perform well and earn a better income. Your riches begin to increase as long as you are healthy. In fact, people build their financial securities for their old age, when they will be no longer able to work on account of ill health, right in their younger days. People salt money away for those days in which their health will begin to dwindle. This clearly shows one thing – *we need good health to be able to earn money.*

A few people have the wrong idea. They think that riches can buy good health. They think that when they have a large amount of money, they can keep diseases away by going for the best curative options possible. But, even the richest people die, don't they? Health is a great leveler, we all know that but only few of us accept it.

But, as long as we live in the world we are in, we cannot shun the idea of wealth either. The optimal thing to do, therefore, would be to strike a balance between health and wealth. If you are looking at making your life better than what it is now, you have to learn this secret.

Here are some things that you must take care of:-

- Work for money, but don't overexert yourself. It is all right to do so occasionally, but people who do it all the time never amount to much. They will be able to earn a good amount of money presently because of their doubled efforts, but they won't be able to do so for long. Sooner or later, their health will begin to fade and they won't be able to earn their usual steady amount of money too.
- Work can take a toll on health in other ways. Socializing with your office friends, for example, could be disastrous to health in the long run. Make sure you know where to draw the line.
- However early in the morning you have to begin work, always make sure that you keep at least a half hour for stretching and doing some meditative exercises. This will not just keep you healthy but will also help you do better at work.
- Research on various health plans and choose one for yourself. This is going to be quite beneficial to you sooner than you think.

Chapter 4:

Your Family and Your Life

Summary

Living optimally means getting closer to the family, not escaping from it.

Your Family and Your Life

For a lot of people, the family is the most important institution in their lives. It is an extended part of their lives. It is where they see themselves mirrored and make an impression of themselves. There's an old saying that says a man is only as happy as his family is, and it is true even today. Any problem with the family is bound to show immediately on us, and hence if you are thinking about optimal living, you cannot ignore the family aspect.

However, society is changing today. We are breaking ties with our close ones even if we are living in the same house. There are many reasons that are fueling this. People are losing the emotional connect they had earlier. Celebratory family dinners, festival gatherings, occasions, all these things are dwindling away. People are bringing their work home and that's taking them away from their family too.

This is leading to problems such as loneliness, depression, spats within the family members, periods of non-communication between members of the family, etc... each of which can take a serious toll on the lives of everyone involved.

So what is the way to ensure you live more fruitfully with your family?

One of the main things you will need here is communication. Whatever the extent of your work is, however busy you are, do make it a point to speak with *every* member of your family *every* day. People from India have a great saying here – *A family that eats together stays together*. This is a distortion of the English saying – *A family that prays together stays together*. But if you were to think about it, both these sayings are quite apt. Both of them can be quite instrumental in bringing families closer. Make such a routine in your household. You may not pray together, but you can certainly eat together. Switch the television off during

these meals. Schedule a fixed time each day. You will find that you exchange much more in these few minutes than you do in your entire day.

Families usually don't expect much from you. All they want is that you stay responsive to them. They want to know that you are there for them. They may not expect material benefits from you, but they certainly expect the feeling of closeness and warmth that you can give them.

Make sure you give them this. Don't drift away from your family. Tomorrow, if you happen to be alone, the biggest sorrow you will have will be of moving away from your family.

People who are closer to their families are happier. They are not alone. They can face the trials and tribulations of life together. Even as you try to discover your own individual freedom, try to keep your ties with your family members alive, and that doesn't mean just the members of your family staying in the house – it refers to everyone that has any kind of familial connection with you.

Chapter 5:

3 Practical Essentials for Optimal Living – Food, Fun and Exercise

Summary

You need to be happy to have an optimal life. Happiness is brought by material things, however temporal that happiness might be.

3 Practical Essentials for Optimal Living – Food, Fun and Exercise

Different things drive different people. Those little joys and delights of life are not universal. Someone may be very happy when they are cooking, while others may be happy when they are listening to a poem by Keats. But, there are three things that cut across all borders of space, time and distance and make everyone happy. These are good food, great fun and playful exercise.

If you are here to create an optimal level for your life, you would find it very difficult to do it without incorporating these three essential elements in your life.

Food

Everyone likes food, though individual tastes might be different. In fact, people who say they don't like food are lying. They do like food; it is only that they haven't yet found what kind of cuisine drives them. It is because everyone loves food that we treat people with it whenever there is any cause célèbre. And this is true in all societies and countries, all over the world.

However, that doesn't mean you should hog on food. You should not use it as a means of stress-buster. That could have a very damaging effect. If you use food in a therapeutic manner, it could work for the moment, but soon it will raise its head in the form of obesity and the several other health problems that are related with it.

Have great food – visit those restaurants, whip up great recipes in your own kitchen, make a big deal out of it – but in moderation. You will find that great food becomes an essential part of your optimal life.

Fun

Another thing that really raises the happiness levels in people is fun, or you could say, entertainment. You might find perpetual bliss in popping in a DVD and watching it while lying on your couch. Or maybe you like to travel to unknown places. Or probably you just want to curl up and read a paperback. Whatever it is that defines entertainment and recreation for you, use it. Don't deprive yourself of it just because you have too much work or because you think you don't deserve to give yourself your bit of fun.

If you keep focus on what you really want to do, such small spells of fun won't harm you. In fact, they will rejuvenate you and help you work better. Yes, you will meet those deadlines too, provided you don't go overboard with your entertainment options.

Exercise

Exercise doesn't always mean pumping iron. Sport is an exercise too, and for most people, sport is an integral part of life. If your life has become so busy that all those childhood games have become nonexistent in it, bring them out again. Join a club and play your favorite sport. Do this once a week if not more. You will soon find that your life has become much more enriched in quality.

What's best is that you can meet new people who could become your friends. If your friends currently are just the people from work, it is a very sorry state of affairs. If you have to depend only on someone from the family when you have to catch a great movie, you are in a bad state. You need some friends you could hang out with without reservations – friends like the ones you had when you were in high school. Is it possible? Very much! If you are looking for friends, you must know that they are too. It is just about getting together. Sport can do this for you.

You get your entertainment and you also get great friends. Quite undeniably, this is a wonderful aspect of life – don't downplay it!

Chapter 6:

Your Sex Life – An Undeniable Aspect for Your Optimal Life

Summary

Sex is an essential part of life. Remove sex from life, and life becomes a big void.

*If you take sex in the right way, it could enrich your life the way nothing else
can.*

Your Sex Life – An Undeniable Aspect of Your Optimal Life

A lot of people bring their sex life out of the bedroom than one might think. Sex is not as closeted as it is made out to be. Mull over this – a bad sexual episode makes the boss grumpy and he begins biting everyone's head off at work. Someone doesn't get laid the previous night despite being extremely horny and they bring their libido to work. On the other hand, someone had a great sexual night and they are in highest spirits today. If that is not bringing sex out of the bedroom, what is it?

All of us, in some or the other measure, bring our sex lives out of our bedrooms. People who know us can easily tell the difference. How many times have our friends asked us, "Hey Joe, you are in high spirits today man! What happened last night?" Even though just casual banter, it means something important. It means that people equate good sex with good living.

If the Almighty hadn't ordained sex to play such an important part of our life, He would not have made it so important to carry the species forward.

But for us, on an individual level, sex is essential because it is one of the primary needs for life. I am not saying that we have to be libidinous all the time, but we do need to feel secure about it. It is important for us to realize that we have access to fulfill our sexual needs. That is why we have institutionalized marriage. Marriage means a lot of other important things – probably much more important too – but it also means sexual security. At the risk of sounding carnal, it can be said that marriage means not having to go hunting for sexual partners anymore. This is essential in keeping life optimal.

However, the first step to really meaningful sex is love. That is a whole different story in itself. But if you can find someone with whom you can build an emotional

equation and not just a physical one, then you will find that your life becomes more fulfilling.

Chapter 7:

Have a Hobby

Summary

An idle mind is a devil's workshop.

Have a Hobby

If you want to make your life more meaningful, one of the ways to do it is to fill the voids. Fill the emptiness that exists in it. When you make your life more productive, automatically your life gains more meaning.

The best way to go about that is to have a hobby. A hobby is something that you like to do. It won't give you money, but it can give you something more important. It gives you mental peace. It makes you realize that you can get something more out of your life than just what your work can give you. It makes you feel good about yourself because you know you are doing something creative.

So what is it that really drives you? Here are some common hobby ideas that can enrich your life.

Gardening

Gardening is considered a great hobby and it is ecologically beneficial too. But what is most significant about it is that it gives you a feeling that you can "create" life. When you see your saplings grow, the feeling they can create in your mind is nonpareil. Many people who devote themselves to gardening do so because it teaches them to appreciate life in a better way.

Traveling

A lot of people enjoy traveling. Visiting different places, eating different foods, understanding how people in different parts of the world live differently, picking up their languages and dialects, learning about their cultures and customs is something that can really enrich your mind. A person who has traveled a lot has improved the mind with various experiences and will have a lot of stories to tell.

Nature Painting

Got a skill with the paintbrush? Then probably painting will be more in your line. Even here, you could try your hand at nature painting, because this is an art that can really make you appreciate even the smallest things in nature. You realize everything that exists in the world around you and you can become happier about your own life too.

Reading

Reading opens up the mind. It makes you more creative; it makes you imagine better. You learn how to see beyond the trivial things that people usually think about. You begin to see the larger picture. The more well-read a person is, the more enriched in mind he or she will be.

In short, any hobby that has something to teach you or helps you to see things differently can be a great idea for a hobby. These hobbies help you to look beyond your normal survival instinct and make you a much better person, who is living optimally.

Chapter 8:

It Is Not Just about the Present

Summary

Optimal living is not just for today. Make sure that you live in happiness for as long as you are here.

It Is Not Just about the Present

A very lethal mistake that we make in the way of our achieving happiness is that we think only about the present. We think that we have something today that makes us happy and that's just about it. We don't consciously strive to build securities for tomorrow. This is where we fail.

If we live in the knowledge that our future is not protected, we will certainly not be able to make the most of today. We will forever be living in the shadow of an uncertain tomorrow and that could hamper our present like nothing else can.

An optimal life is a life that is secured for the future.

You must have a good insurance plan that will protect your future. You might find various options around you, but you need to take some time out from your busy present life and find a plan that best suits your purposes. Once you have such a plan, make sure you keep it up. Though you cannot see the fruits of this plan currently, tomorrow it will come in handy. You cannot say when an emergency might strike.

No one can predict what will happen tomorrow. But if we think that we have done our best to secure our future, our lives will be happier today as well.

It is not just about monetary security, though. We also have to invest in relationships. Giving love to everyone around us is actually a way of securing our future. When we spread this love, we are also building their trust and companionship forever. Tomorrow, when we could be lonely, these people could be of great value to us. They could make our lives better than they would normally be.

The same applies for friendships. It is quite unwise to treat everyone around in a surly manner. We must not paint ourselves in a corner while everyone else is outside. The thing we must actually do is to reach out to as many people as we can. Everyone can be a potential friend for life.

What we spoke about financial security applies to relationships as well. When you live in the knowledge that you have done your best for your family and friends, you can sleep better at night because you know they will stand for you too. You may not have helped them out selfishly, but this is an aftereffect that you cannot shake yourself from.

Chapter 9:

Is Your Life Optimal Today?

Summary

What about right now? Do you think you are living an optimal life?

Is Your Life Optimal Today?

Do you go to bed each night scared about waking up tomorrow? Or do you go to bed, completely relaxed and with a smile on your face, eager to wake up in the morning and face the new day?

This is the biggest indicator of how optimal your life is. Those few minutes between hitting the bed and falling asleep are when we assess our lives. These are the times when we think how far we have come and where we are headed. If these few minutes can put us into careless slumber, our lives are quite well-placed. But if they only make you toss and turn and reach out for the jug of water a zillion times, then there's something you need to take stock of.

An optimal life is not about how much money you have. It is about how content you are. You might have less, but if it is enough to meet your needs, then you are doing well. It is only dissatisfaction that makes you depressed; whether you are earning more or less doesn't matter.

So ask yourself these questions:-

“Am I contented with my life today?”

“Am I happy with the way my family treats me?”

“Do I think I have some good friends?”

“Am I insecure about money and the future?”

“Am I happy with my job?”

“Am I satisfied with my sex life?”

If your answer to these questions has been affirmative, your life is very close to being optimal. There might be some areas that you still need to work on. If such areas exist, it is a good idea to start working on them right away so that you take your life in a better direction than it is now.

Most importantly, remember that it is not your life that should control you; it is you who should control your life. When you do that, you will see that you are happier with the way your life has headed.

Chapter 10:

Putting Your Self in Your Life

Summary

You are most important to you. It is your life that we are speaking about.

Putting Your Self in Your Life

There will be times in your life when you will begin to give more importance to other people and forget about yourself. This will happen when you first fall in love, have a first child, etc. These people become the center of your attraction. You forget that you are an individual too.

Most problems in life stem from this.

Instead, if you place yourself in the equation too, life becomes much better. When doing something for your loved one, do spare a moment and think how happy that makes you. When you get a gift for him or her, wait awhile and think of the smile on your face too. When you get a great school for your child, think about your own pride too. When you think about yourself, you give emphasis upon yourself as well. You are not just thinking about people around you, but you are thinking about yourself as well.

Why is this important? The most important benefit of thinking about yourself is that you would want to repeat that action. When you remember how happy it made you when you give a present to your spouse, you will want to give it again. When you remember how happy it made you to take your child to the amusement park, you will do that again quite soon.

Because you are giving your loved ones the things that they like, your relationships will keep improving. Your inner thought is to make yourself happy, but you are helping everyone around too.

Relationships dwindle over the ages. Your love for people might also diminish. Children outgrow you and the attachment wears down. Most romantic relationships are good for only a few years. When such things begin happening,

we do not bother ourselves with the small things we once did to keep the relationships happy.

But one relationship will never dwindle. And that is your relationship with yourself. You will always want to see yourself happy. And because you remember that giving your loved ones things made you happy, you will do that again. This will help you keep the flame of the relationships burning bright.

However, only you know the secret – you are doing things as much for yourself as you are doing for them.

In any case, it keeps you happier. It makes your life optimal and worth living.

Conclusion

Living an optimal life is entirely in your hands.

You have to shape it in such a way that it gives you what you are looking for.

You have to take care of it.

You now know what it takes.

All the best to you!!!