

50 FACES OF HAPPY

WORK MONEY LIFE PURPOSE

Banwari Mittal, Ph.D.

50 FACES OF HAPPY



One
professor's
journey of discovering
what makes people **happy**,
through conversations
with over 500 strangers
across 30 states,
50 cities.

50 FACES OF HAPPY

Work . Money . Life . Purpose

Banwari Mittal, Ph.D.



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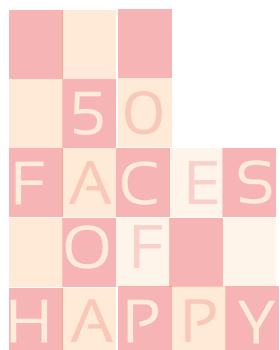
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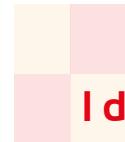
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www.OpenMentis.com



OPEN
MENTIS



I dedicate this book to:

All persons
who want to understand
other people as
individual humans





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Before the conversations begin...

Over the past two years, I traveled around the USA, approached people on the street, and asked them if they would spare a few minutes for a conversation. A lot of them agreed. And thus began the conversations.

Our conversations were at least five minutes long, but most lasted much longer, some up to an hour. We talked on the street; over coffee in a restaurant or in the lobby of a hotel; inside an airport terminal or at a highway rest area; on a beach, or on a hiking trail. None of the conversations were with people I already knew.

Their stories offer a fascinating window into their views on their work and life, their aspirations and strivings, and their sense of happiness.

I share their stories here. Fifty of them. From a pool of more than 500. From thirty states, fifty cities.

Come along and listen in on the conversations!

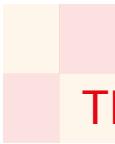


FIVE QUESTIONS

While our conversations were free-flowing, there were five common questions I asked everyone:

1. Tell me about your work. And how do you like it?
2. Tell me about your life at large.
3. If you won a million-dollar lottery, what would you do? (And would you quit your work?)
4. Everybody is seeking happiness; what is happiness to you?
5. What in your opinion is the purpose of life itself?

I asked these questions...and then I listened—without judgment, but always with curiosity and fascination.



THREE MIRRORS

Dear Reader:

For each story, you will have the opportunity to check (✓) one of the three “mirrors.” These “mirrors” reflect three versions of you:

<input type="checkbox"/>	I am	This is me. I am this sort of person.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I want to be	I am striving to be this type of person.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I should want to be	I now realize that this person has perspectives or values that I would like to achieve for myself. This is my True North.

NOTE: Similarity is based not on age, income, occupation, ethnicity, or other physical attributes. Rather, it is defined at a psychological level, in terms of the person we think we are, or aspire to be, based on certain values, life goals, and worldviews.



THE STORIES



Ben Sjodin

1



Minneapolis, MN

My Work

I am a financial advisor in a big investment firm. I help my clients with investments. I like the relationship side of things—fixing their problems. If they say, “I trust you,” then I hope that leads to some progress in their lives.

My Life

I graduated from the University of St. Thomas in business in 2015. In addition to my full-time job, which I love, I also bartend at a golfing club, twice a week, and I coach the University of St. Thomas Club Hockey Team. Both these jobs have given me intangible communication skills. As a bartender, I have to create a good conversation experience for my customers; in coaching, I have to keep my players motivated to excel.

If I Won a Million-Dollar Lottery...

First thing, I will pay for my parents’ retirement—I am what I am because of them! Set my brother and sister up. Then I will help other people—like my high school coaches, who have taught me great life lessons; maybe contribute to the college fund for their kids. Pay off my own student loan. The rest I would invest.

Would you quit your job?

No, because the job is not for money.

The job is not for money?

No, it is for having some meaning and purpose.

Happiness

It is different for everybody. I can’t pinpoint. People say money buys you happiness; I don’t agree with that. At the same time, it gives you the freedom to do whatever you want to do.

Happiness to me is be able to wake up and go somewhere you enjoy going. And at the end of the day and week and year, feel fulfilled, feel that you are reaching your potential.

Purpose of Life

To serve society. You have to find something that you like and be the best at it and this contributes to society. My job—it is *my life*, and with it I help others. It is my way to contribute to society. I owe to everybody the best version of myself!

I am I want to be I should want to be

Allison Evans

2



Raleigh, SC

My Work

I am an urban designer for the city. My job is to review new construction projects in the city; I assess how new buildings will interact with the surroundings—the sidewalks, bike lanes, bus stops, etc. The goal is to make the city more enjoyable for everybody. My job gives me the satisfaction that I am influencing positive change through design.

On the weekends I bartend at a Mexican restaurant. I love the hustle and bustle of the restaurant and I love Mexican food.

My Life

My hometown is in Connecticut. I got a master's degree in urban design from University College London in the UK in 2015. Yes, I like living in Raleigh because the city has a real heart, it is an "independent thinking" city, and the art and restaurant and bar scene is exciting.

As hobbies, I do boxing, row a crew boat, browse in thrift shops, and do small restoration projects—if I find an old piece of furniture I like, I would buy it and restore it for my apartment.

If I Won a Million-Dollar Lottery...

Pay off my student loan, take mom and dad out on a trip to Europe and then invest it in real estate.

Happiness

Freedom from wants and worry. I am happier when I am proud of myself, and when I am working hard. [On a 1-10 scale] I am a *Happy 9*. There are always some worries—your health, your family's health, what happens in the news, etc. So it is hard to be a *10*.

Purpose of Life

It has to be something bigger than yourself, right? But a lot of the things on my bucket list are inwardly focused—the things I want to do, the things I promised myself: Prioritize my career, travel, and form new friendships. So it is about yourself first—you are your biggest project, but that does not mean you cannot do things to affect other people positively.

For me, to have lived a good life would be to collect a lot of experiences and to collect a varied number of friends from diverse backgrounds. I would like to look back and be able to say I knew a lot of people from different walks of life!

I am I want to be I should want to be

Christopher Grassa

3



Boston, MA

My Work

I received a bachelor's degree in zoology and a master's in botany. Now I work as a consultant to farmers. I help farmers solve problems related to plant breeding. I use genetics to identify the plant progeny that will "breed true" and will give the farmer and the consumer the expected crop quality.

Currently, I am also a Ph.D. student at Harvard. I am researching how human behavior shapes the evolution of crops.

My Life

I live in a co-op house and every Friday we have a big dinner to which we invite some twenty to thirty people, selected from a mailing list we have curated. We do this to meet new people, discuss their ideas, and understand diverse views.

If I Won a Million-Dollar Lottery...

I would invest it in some way and continue to do what I am doing. No, I would not retire even with a fifty- or one-hundred-million-dollar lottery. I would continue to work on my ideas—my ideas are my children! I want them to succeed.

Tell me one of those ideas.

I am actively working on an idea that will help farmers prevent loss of their crop—whereby they would plant seeds and be sure to harvest something even in the face of a drought or blight.

Happiness

To me, there are two kinds of happiness: One, being happy in the immediate moment, and, second, having a holistic, global, satisfaction—knowing that my ideas are out in the world and are helping people. My key to happiness is balancing the joy of the day-to-day events and the fulfillment of the long-term goals.

Purpose of Life

Finding happiness! But everyone is going to find it in his or her own ways.

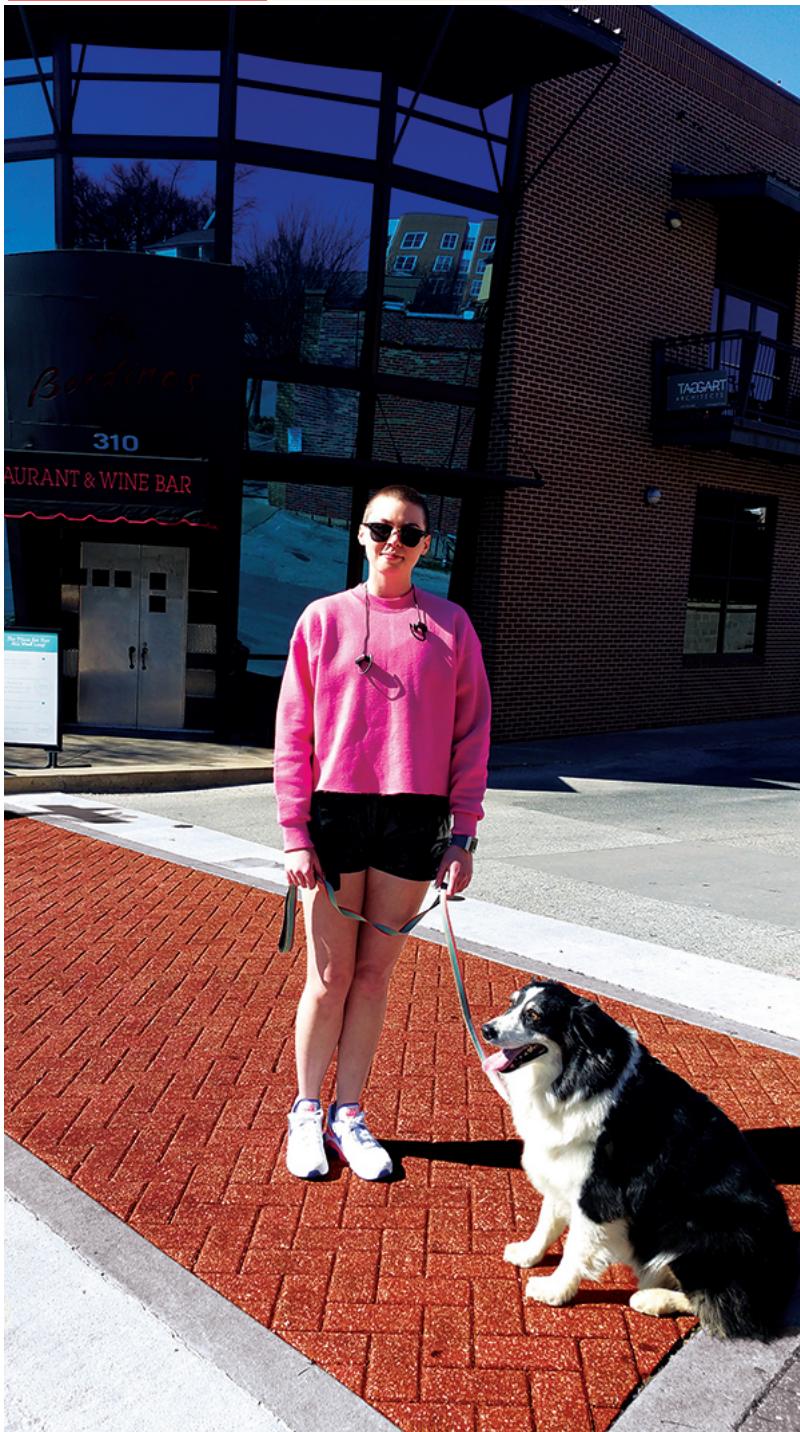
What is your way?

For me, that way is by making the plants we consume healthier and more delicious, improving crop yield, and decreasing waste. I hope to preserve biodiversity, make economic gains through innovation, and thus bring joy and happiness to people's lives!

I am I want to be I should want to be

Madison Schallhorn

4



Fayetteville, AR

My Life

I am twenty-four. I grew up in Little Rock, AR, and I graduated with honors from Hendrix College in 2016, history major. I moved here because people are so friendly and are environmentally conscious. It is really easy here to live a local and a healthy lifestyle. I love it here.

I dabble in playing bass guitar. I used to sing choral music; now I sing R&B and alternative music. I am into the local music scene. And I listen to podcasts on PBS, on cultural topics, like *Freakonomics*, *Marketplace*, *Invisibilia*, and I like *This American Life* a lot.

My Work

In college I did an internship at the Clinton Presidential Library as an archival assistant. My job was to restore documents and artifacts. The coolest thing for me was to digitize speeches and videos. I worked also on foreign gifts—technically, all foreign gifts belong to American citizens, so they are kept in the library for citizens to see.

In college, I had worked incredibly hard so I decided to take a mental break before going to grad school—I plan to do graduate work in library science. Currently, I manage and bartend at a local craft pizzeria. I love this job. I like the option of using my skills in different places. I always want to feel vital and important to an organization.

CONTD. ...

I am I want to be I should want to be

L.E. Gomez + Melissa Merritt

5



Annapolis, MD

My Work

L.E.: I somehow made it through Cornell's College of Arts and Sciences, and eventually got an MD and an MBA. I currently work as a clinical professor of emergency medicine in D.C. and Maryland.

Melissa: I graduated from the University of Mary Washington in environmental science. My interest in environmental sciences was awakened by a project for a class in high school concerning the Chesapeake Bay. After graduation, as luck would have it, I found a job with the Chesapeake Bay Program itself. I am a staff member for multiple committees that do scientific analysis that will help preserve and save the Chesapeake Bay.

Do you like your work?

Melissa: A tricky question. I firmly believe that the environment is the cause I can contribute to. But I am also a lot more creative—I once considered theater for my major, so I need to find opportunities to apply my creativity to environmental conservation causes for the Bay

L.E.: I love what I do but not how I have to do it. I love taking care of people when they are critically ill. And the responsibility of training and teaching new doctors, especially the ones from underrepresented ethnic backgrounds, is very important to me. My problem is that every day I face a dilemma between the economic factors for the institution I work for and my personal ethical mission to bring to my patients the best healthcare possible.

My Life

Community Projects Are Important to Us

L.E.: I'm active in community and professional organizations that focus on social justice. I support a group called *One Annapolis* as well as our new mayor's progressive politics, hoping to reduce *de facto* segregation in this city. I am also involved in a project called *SURJ (Showing Up for Racial Justice)*. And I started a group named *African Diaspora Identity Group*—it's a forum for black identity.

Melissa: I am a coordinator for the local chapter of SURJ. In my hometown in West Virginia, where I grew up, people are very conservative; I want to promote an attitude that welcomes diversity.

If I Won a Ten-Million-Dollar Lottery...

L.E.: It is much more than what I need for myself. So, perhaps we could create a fund to support programs that promote inclusion.

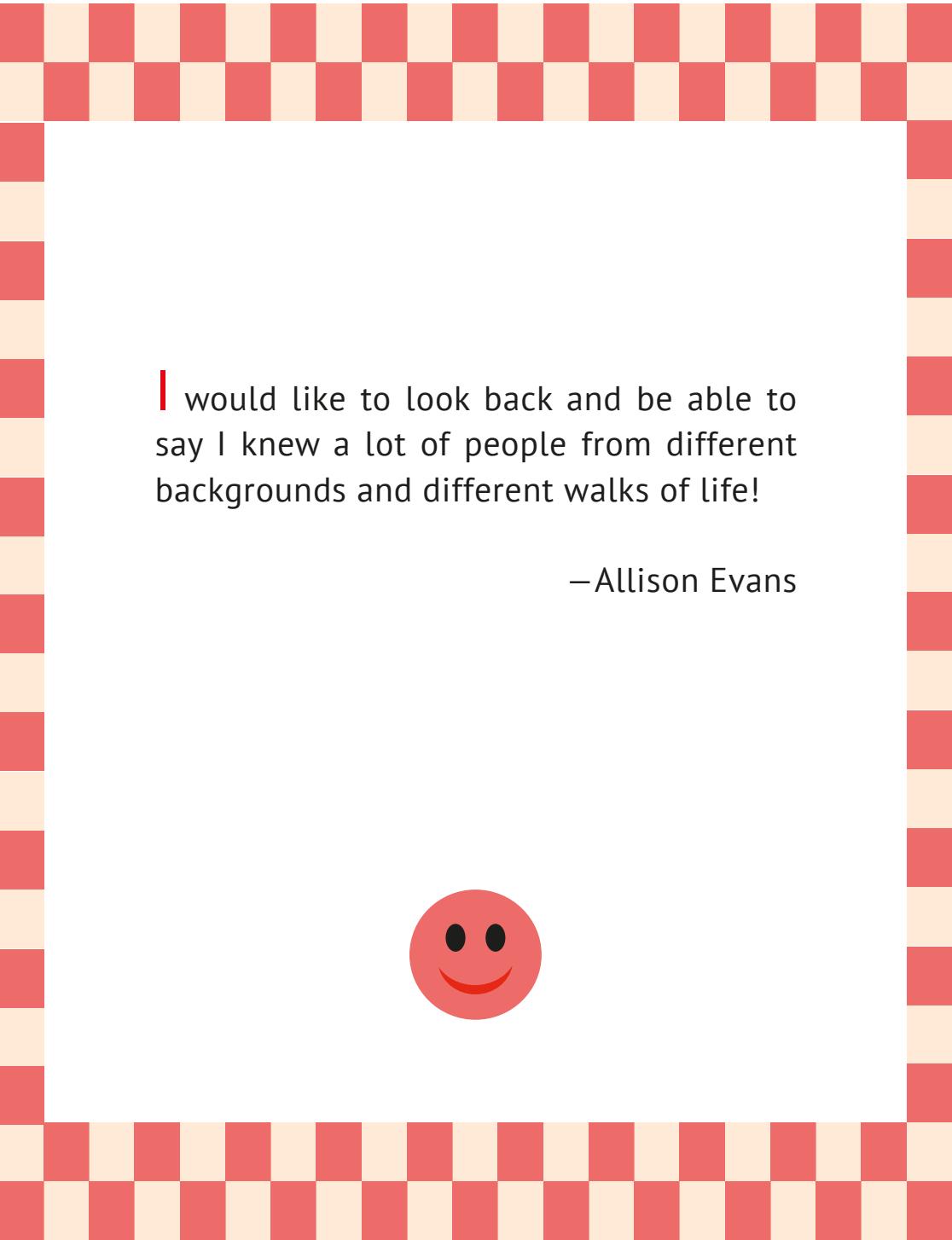
Melissa: My initial thought was travel, travel, travel—to experience different things. But I think after a while I would feel guilty having that much money just for ourselves. I would like to do something for West Virginia (e.g., make it more welcoming of di-

Interview continued (omitted from this selection)

5



I am I want to be I should want to be



I would like to look back and be able to say I knew a lot of people from different backgrounds and different walks of life!

—Allison Evans



Tiaa B. Rutherford

Purpose of Life

Purpose is to be able to help other people.

Are you living that purpose?

Yes, I am. I help people every day—I help them understand the power they have to live as a better community, have a better relationship with their environment, understand that there are plants that will heal their body. And I help small businesses. I like to invest in small businesses because when we invest in small businesses we invest in people. This shirt I am wearing, I helped design it for a small business. I feel fulfilled being who I am.

Who are you?

I am a queen and I am a woman, and I am an African American.

“I am a queen,” what does that mean?

Being a *queen* means that I completely understand the power that I possess, that I can birth an entire nation of kings and queens; so those are the powerful things I possess, and nothing can take that away from me.

Birth a nation of kings and queens?

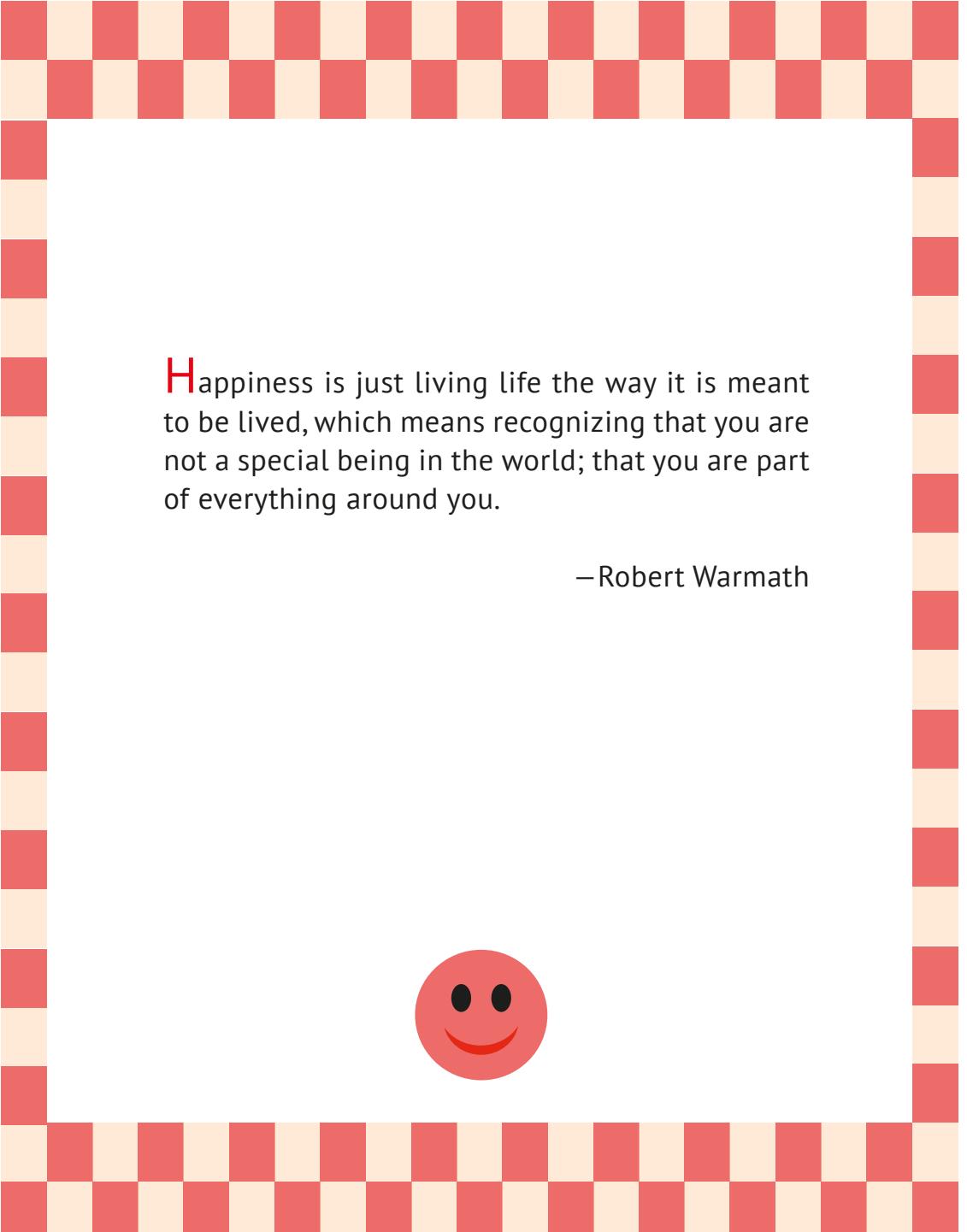
Yes, being a *woman*, the child I birth could become the next president!

10



Interview continued
from previous page
(Not included in this sample)

I am I want to be I should want to be



Happiness is just living life the way it is meant to be lived, which means recognizing that you are not a special being in the world; that you are part of everything around you.

—Robert Warming



Kimberly A. Peyton + Troy S. Sakihara

49



Honolulu, HI

Sighted in Providence, RI



Happiness is a state where I miss nothing.

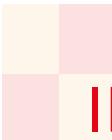
—Anna Krimerman

Our Place in the Universe

Sitting at your desk, you create a financial plan for a client's retirement security, draw an architectural diagram for a new stadium, or write code for the next killer app. In the factory, you install an airbag in a car, pour molten glass to make shatterproof phone screens, or weave microfiber to create athletic shirts that keep our bodies cool even in blazing sun. In the field, you plow the land; in the city, you drive a bus for commuters; at school, you help a kid learn math; in the hospital, you inject a flu vaccine; in the dinner, you cook dinner for starving guests. You manage a billion-dollar business; teach neuroscience at an Ivy League school; invent a new mechanical heart; build a spaceship to the moon. In these and all other manifestations of work, you are being valuable to society. You are making the world go around. You are indeed at the center of the universe.

You are everything. You must celebrate your personal self.

Continued on the next page
(Not included in this sample)



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Author with Ko Shun-YU

Sighted at John A. Roebling Suspension Bridge, Cincinnati, Ohio

Photo: Chih-Hao Chiang

About the Author

Banwari (“Ban”) Mittal is a social scientist with a Ph.D. in consumer psychology from the University of Pittsburgh. For over two decades, he has been a professor of marketing and consumer psychology at the University at Buffalo, the University of Miami, the University of New South Wales, and Northern Kentucky University, his current home for teaching and creativity.

Over the years, he has talked to several hundred consumers, developing an understanding of the psychology of their shopping and consumption behavior. His book, *Consumer Behavior: Human Pursuit of Happiness in the World of Goods* (Open Mentis, 2006, 2010, 2012, 2016), is arguably his magnum opus on human behavior in the marketplace.

In 2000, he interviewed a slew of senior executives from *Fortune* magazine’s Most Admired Companies to understand how these market leaders create value for their customers. His findings were published in a book titled *ValueSpace: Winning the Battle for Market Leadership* (McGraw Hill, 2001).

Two years ago, he began a new endeavor: asking people on the street what happiness meant to them. Since then, he has crisscrossed the USA, logging some 25,000 miles—by air, car, and on foot. From New York to California, and from Montana to Florida. He has held conversations with some 500+ people on topics encompassing work, money, life, and happiness. Talking to people at random and listening to their stories is now his passion!

He lives in Cincinnati, Ohio, the city listed among the top 50 in the 2019 *U.S. News & World Report’s List of Best Places to Live!*

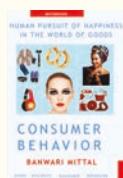
Other published books



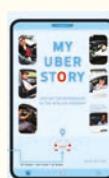
2001



2006



2016



2019

www.BanMittal.com

50FacesofHappy.com

Instagram: Happy2me2020

Twitter: BanMittal

Facing page: Ko Shun-YU, an engineering student at National Taipei University of Technology, Taiwan, was on a three-week visit to the USA for a summer class session at the University of Cincinnati. He was sighted by the author at this landmark and happily agreed to a conversation.



YOUR PAGE

This is your space to write your own journal—
your view of your work, life, happiness. 2020

My Work

(1-10)

My Life

If I Won a Million-Dollar Lottery...



Happiness

(1-10)

Purpose of Life

Work Do I enjoy my work? What meaning does it have for me?

Life What is going good in my life? What is unique? What am I missing? Where would I like to take it?

A Lottery Win My plan for spending the win money will include ...

Happiness I am happier when _____. What will I do to raise my happiness this year?

Purpose My purpose of life is ... And here is how I will live it more.

Updates

Two more PLANNER pages omitted from this sample

Your
Page

	2024	2025
My Work (1-10)		
My Life		
If I Won a Million-Dollar Lottery...		
Happiness (1-10)		
Purpose of Life		



50 FACES OF **HAPPY**
50 FACES OF **HAPPY**

A Coffee-Table Book

50 FACES OF **HAPPY**

A Coffee-Table Book

50 FACES OF **HAPPY**

50 FACES OF **HAPPY**

50 FACES OF **HAPPY**

A Self-Gift Book

50 FACES OF **HAPPY**

50 FACES OF **HAPPY**

Last year, a social scientist and professor crisscrossed the USA and Canada, approaching people on the street at random and asking them a few questions. Some 500+ of them.

Engineers, doctors, factory workers, managers, merchants, lawyers, musicians, artists, homemakers, students—they told him what happiness meant to them.



Read their answers here, a sample of 50 of them. And then write or rewrite your own!



A potpourri
of street interviews
with people across
the nation on
questions
of deep personal
relevance

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