

September 2012 . Issue Six . Change Edition

TORN

Arts & Culture Magazine



★ ★
NEW
DEBATE
SECTION

Clare Corzfeld Carr
♡ The
KATHERINE Dear
MARTIN Teacher
Batech

The Happiness Project by Naomi Racz

Usually I shy away from self-help books, but *The Happiness Project* is not your typical self-help book. Rather, Rubin takes a very scientific approach to happiness and carries out thorough research, reading everything from Plato to up-to-the-minute psychology theories, and she charts her progress quite literally with charts and graphs. What's more, Rubin isn't unhappy when she starts the project, rather, her goal is to appreciate the life she has. I think it is this that saves the book from any potential cringe-factor and makes it a worthy read. Following Rubin's model, anyone can learn to be happier, you don't have to be able to afford a plane ticket to India, or live in a Buddhist monastery for a year.

When reading *The Happiness Project* I did intend to carry out my own happiness project. I haven't quite managed it yet, but I've definitely taken on board a few of Rubin's rules.

1. **Don't cling to aspirational clutter:** This is the stuff we keep hold of because it represents the person we wish we were. I definitely have a lot of aspirational clutter and nowhere is this more evident than on my book shelves. I have a lot of Teach Yourself x language books because I would love to be able to speak another language. The problem is, I don't actually enjoy learning languages, so I know I'll never get round to reading any of them. During a recent clear-out having the concept of aspiration clutter in mind helped me halve my book collection.

2. **Be Naomi:** Before starting the project Rubin writes down twelve commandments, or overarching principles, to guide her through the project. Number one is 'Be Gretchen', which is a reminder to be more accepting of her likes and dislikes and to stop trying to be the person she feels she *ought* to be. It is also a reminder not to have guilty pleasures, but rather to embrace them – so what if I like listening to Taylor Swift and watching Britain's Got Talent?

3. **Be less belligerent:**

Surprisingly it's not a word I'd encountered before, but when I read it in *The Happiness Project* I thought that's me! I will usually always find a way to disagree with someone's statement, even if I agree with them. I blame the fact that I studied Philosophy at university, so spent 4 years trying to find the weaknesses in other people's arguments. Of course it's a great skill to have, but it's not always a good thing. I find myself doing it to my friends and family a lot, and I know it usually creates a bad feeling.



{Photograph by Camila Fraiz}