

# SUMMARY

## THE BIG LEAP

GAY HENDRICKS



# **Summary of “The Big Leap” by Gay Hendricks**

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Written for anyone who’s ever felt that their fears and insecurities are getting in the way of accomplishing their life goals, *The Big Leap* (2009) is a guidebook for taking that life-changing plunge.

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# Introduction

Have you ever watched a cliff-diver take a death-defying leap off a cliff, hit the sea, and come up smiling? If you have, that's probably the biggest life-changing event that comes to mind when you think of "taking the big leap"-- and you're probably also thinking, "There's no way I'd ever do that!" But fortunately for those of us who are terrified of heights (myself included), taking the big leap in your personal and professional life doesn't have to look so scary. Instead, you can quietly and deliberately take control of your life simply by making a decision within yourself, no hundred-foot cliffs required. And through the course of this summary, we'll take a look at exactly how you can do that, starting with some top tips like:

- How deep breathing can put you on the right path
- Why your worries are sabotaging you, and
- What a "complaining diet" is and why your office might need one

# People Often Resist Happiness

If someone told you that you could have a life of unlimited happiness, you probably wouldn't say, "No thanks," right? But in practice, people actually make this decision multiple times throughout their lives without even realizing what they're turning down. That's because of one peculiar (and universal) human trait: the fact that everyone has an innate resistance to happiness. And if you don't believe me, just consider the question: what if you went through an entire day with nothing to complain about? Can you even imagine that? If you think about it that way, you might start to realize that you're uniquely addicted to your patterns of complaining, even though you claim to hate all the stuff you grouse about day by day. It sounds weird, especially given the fact that we spent a significant portion of our lives striving for happiness, but the truth is that even if we want to be happy, we're not really equipped to handle it. In fact, throughout our entire educational careers, we're never presented with a class on how to cultivate lasting happiness or achieve satisfaction with our lives.

But if you were to embark on a journey of introspection and take a closer look at your motivations, you might find that you resist happiness because of fear, whether that's a fear of achieving your full potential, fear of rejection, or fear of failure. The last two probably sound pretty accurate, but why would anybody be afraid of achieving their full potential? The answer is simpler than you might think-- because once you unlock your full potential and start living into that, you've robbed yourself of all those convenient excuses about why your dreams aren't coming true. And let's face it, sometimes it's easier to make those excuses than it is to actually get up and do something. But if you ever want to move past that stage and achieve real change in your life, then you have to start by subduing this fear. So, let's take a look at a few of the strategies you can employ as you take this leap.

Your first technique for breaking through the fear barrier is breathing. That's right-- just simply breathing like you do every day. It works because

in the 1990s, the German psychiatrist Fritz Perls developed something called Gestalt therapy which recognized that, physiologically, fear manifests as a sort of breathless excitement. But by reclaiming control over your breathing, you can channel that sensation into a powerful excitement which can fuel positive change.

How does it work? Let's say, for example, that you're about to give a speech and you feel paralyzed by stage fright. Now, under these circumstances, the common reaction would be for your lungs to sort of seize up, restricting your breathing and increasing your fear. But if you take a moment to concentrate and breathe deeply and deliberately-- in through your nose and then out through your mouth-- you'll find that you can take control of your breath and, by extension, your emotions. As you begin to regain control, you'll feel more confident and be able to redirect that nervous energy into a sense of power that will help you dominate the stage and blow your audience away.

# Some People Believe They Only Deserve Limited Happiness

Do you have any hopes or dreams that you feel are out of reach or impractical? Sadly, we all have a few of these and that's owing to something called an "upper-limit mindset." It's also our next hurdle to tackle together. An upper-limit mindset is kind of like having our own personal warning system that tells us we can only achieve success up until a certain point; after that, we've reached our peak and we're not capable of going past it. When our lives are guided by this mindset, it's common to feel like there's a period of success where everything is going well, followed by a period of intense discomfort as our winning streak begins to make us feel ill at ease. It's at this point that-- whether we realize we're doing it or not-- we begin to create obstacles or cause things to go wrong just so we can feel a little more like life is "back to normal."

This is a classic example of self-sabotage and, sadly, it's all too common. It's also worth noting that we tend to sabotage ourselves in areas of life which are separate from the ones that are going well. If, for example, your love life is going great, you might find yourself stirring up trouble at work so you can devolve into a sense of comfortable crisis.

But you don't have to live that way. And fortunately, recognizing our self-sabotaging tendencies is the first step to defeating them-- just ask Lois, one of the author's therapy clients! At the time she saw the author, Lois was in her fifties and running a very successful business. Unfortunately, however, her love life wasn't doing so well because Lois had convinced herself that she "just wasn't good at love."

Thankfully, however, after a few therapy sessions, Lois realized that she might have made a mistake and decided to give love another go. This open-mindedness in turn prepared her to be accepting when a loving, healthy relationship did enter her life and for a while, it seemed like things were going well. But once Lois was happy with the state of both her personal and



professional life, she decided that she must have achieved the breakthrough she needed and was ready to quit therapy. Although she didn't realize it at the time, this was a form of self-sabotage and within six months, her relationship was falling apart. Fortunately, however, this provided the wake-up call Lois needed and she was able to recognize her self-destructive tendencies. Once she resumed therapy and continued working on her personal development, she was able to save the relationship and started to believe that she really did deserve to be happy in all areas of her life.

# Letting Go of Useless Worries

We're all aware of the dangers of distracted driving and we understand how important it is to keep our eyes on the road so we can safely continue on our course. But we're not always so vigilant when it comes to eliminating distractions in our personal lives or monitoring how often we get in our own way. So, how can we improve our awareness? Well, one great starting point is to be on the lookout for signs of an upper-limit mindset and worry is one of its signature hallmarks.

So, the next time you catch yourself worrying, question the source of the worry and then ask yourself: is this something I have control over? In most cases, the answer will be no. And if our worries are out of control, that means it's ultimately pointless to waste our time and energy on them. However, if your evaluation does lead you to the conclusion that you can do something about your worries, use that realization as an opportunity to terminate your anxiety. Instead of drawing it out with useless worrying, go ahead and take action to solve the problem so you can get on with your life!

In most cases, however, you'll discover that your worries ultimately aren't about real problems. For example, one patient of the author's was a billionaire, but he was always stressed about small things like the price of toilet paper. This is another classic case of an upper-limit mindset because even though he could have been revelling in a luxurious lifestyle, for some reason, he just didn't feel capable of enjoying his success. Instead, the money which might be a source of happiness for many people became nothing but a source of constant stress for him. This story just goes to show that no matter what success we achieve in life, it won't solve our deeper problems. In fact, unless we resolve those problems, the chances are high that we'll never be able to truly enjoy our success at all.

## Success Lies in the “Zone of Genius”

When was the last time you got so engrossed in what you were doing that you felt like you were really “in the zone?” When you were enjoying what you were doing so much that time just seemed to fall away? For many of us, sadly, the last time we felt that way was when we were kids. But no matter how long ago it was, it’s a pretty safe bet that everyone would like to feel that way again. So, how can you make that happen? Well, the first step is to commit yourself to working only in your “Zone of Genius,” also known as the job you’re uniquely suited for. And even though it might sound impossible, that perfect job really does exist for everyone! It’s just that we don’t always find it.

Fear is one thing that holds us back from connecting with our perfect job. Whether that’s because we’re afraid of rejection or because we worry that, once we find that perfect job, we won’t have any excuse to avoid doing our best work, we often resist pursuing that ideal job because we’re worried about something. But if you want to overcome that fear, you can rely on a helpful affirmation for boosting your confidence and strength. Simply start by saying: “I commit to dedicating all my purpose and energy to finding my personal Zone of Genius in which I can contribute the most to the world.”

You can start by softly repeating this affirmation to yourself and then work up to repeating it loudly and confidently for all the world to hear. And as you adjust your worldview accordingly, altering your thinking, you might find that things start to fall into place for you. This can be true even if you’re not totally sure what you want to do with your life. For example, if you’re in college and you feel torn between medicine, engineering, and psychiatry, staying true to your Zone of Genius can help you find clarity. You can do this by paying close attention to your thoughts and feelings as you study and this will help you to recognize which subject brings you closer to that state of effortless flow. Remember, you’ll know your flow when you find that subject that makes you feel as though no time has passed at all, as if you can’t get enough of what you’re doing. This, in turn,

will help you discover what your Zone of Genius looks like and, by extension, you'll find the job you're truly meant to do.

And the best part of finding your Zone of Genius is that once you discover the work you genuinely love to do, you'll find that old cliché "Do what you love and you'll never work a day in your life" can really come true. So, don't be afraid to discover your Zone of Genius! The possibilities are endless and so is your potential. You just have to get out there and discover it.

# The Power of the Enlightened No

Once you find your Zone of Genius, it's important that you stay in that zone and use its power to help you climb a never-ending ladder of success. Having a mantra for success can help you stay on track. You can think of your mantra as a personalized software program that's downloading success to your mind's hard drive. Here's how it works: repeating a mantra is a simple form of meditation that anybody can use and it's helpful because while you repeat the words, you can begin to focus the entirety of your energy and attention on what you're saying. This in turn will help you to visualize your message and its intention.

If you wanted to get super serious and achieve the best possible results, you could really commit and meditate for multiple hours every day. But because most of us don't have time for that, many people find that they can benefit from a "drive-thru meditation style" like a mantra you can repeat on the go. And even if you only put in 30 minutes at the start and end of each day, you'll still see positive results! So, if you're now wondering what this awesome mantra is, the answer is simple. Just start your day by taking a deep breath and repeating the following: "I will expand in success, abundance, and love each day and inspire those around me to do the same." It might sound silly at first, but there's a unique power to speaking your desires into the world, so don't knock it till you've tried it!

You can also go the extra mile by practicing the Enlightened No. This is a handy little trick which helps you stay on track by avoiding influences that aren't in line with your Zone of Genius. For example, let's say a colleague comes to you with a proposition: for a reasonable price that you can actually afford, you could earn \$50,000 from a new product that has the potential to do the world a lot of good.

For the sake of this example, we'll imagine that the product in question is a biofeedback machine that will help people who've been paralyzed. On the surface, that might sound like a pretty good deal, but the Enlightened No

helps you to examine the offer on a deeper level by asking you if it's aligned with your Zone of Genius. So, if your Zone of Genius is neuroscience, then this sounds like a great match! But if your life's purpose is to make music, this might not be a good fit because you're investing in something that lies outside of your Zone of Genius. Applied thusly, you can see how the Enlightened No will help you stay on track and avoid getting involved with opportunities that distract you from your true goals.

## Final Summary

Many people go through life believing that they only deserve a certain amount of happiness and success. This is known as an “upper-limit mindset” and it’s not true! In fact, it simply holds you back from taking the big leap and pursuing the unlimited happiness you actually deserve. You can conquer your fears by analyzing your worries, determining their source, and asking yourself if you’re worried about something that’s within your control. If you find that it isn’t, simply let that worry go.

You can also let go of an upper-limit mindset by recognizing your self-sabotaging tendencies and seeking help that will enable you to accept success and happiness. Once you acknowledge that you deserve to reach your full potential, you can take the next step and pursue your Zone of Genius. By developing your commitment to this pursuit and practicing your personal success mantra along with the Enlightened No, you’ll soon find that taking the big leap is easier than you thought and that success is well within your reach.



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