



## ‘Come On, Get Happy’

When I was in elementary school (and later, through the joy of reruns), my favorite television show was *The Partridge Family*. Shirley Jones played the coolest mom, driving that iconic bus with its colorful Mondrian-inspired design full of her musically talented offspring. Tiny me would watch and yearn. I wanted David Cassidy to be my boyfriend. I wanted Susan Dey’s hair. But most of all, I wanted to be as happy as the Partridge family.

*The Partridge Family* theme song was catchy and encouraging and, if I try even a little bit, it pops right into my head:

*Hello world, here’s a song that we’re singin’  
Come on, get happy  
A whole lotta lovin’ is what we’ll be bringin’  
We’ll make you happy*

Every Friday night, I would sit and wait for my little dose of happy. For 30 minutes, from the animated opening sequence of cute little partridges hatching until the remix of the *even* more upbeat instrumental version of the theme song played through the closing credits, I would immerse myself in the California daydream that was *The Partridge Family*.

These days, I find I am generally happy, though not in a delirious kind of way. My happiness is more of the satisfied, not-unhappy variety. However, in an effort to figure out how to maximize my happiness, I’ve started trying to improve it. I wasn’t quite sure where to start, until I remembered seeing Gretchen Rubin’s book *The Happiness Project* (Harper Paperbacks), first published more than 10 years ago. I’d always meant to read it, though I never had. On a recent drive

to Chicago to visit my daughter, Jill, I decided to listen to the audiobook version.

Rubin does her own narration, which I think makes all the difference. She’s insightful and funny and doesn’t mind taking herself to task. As soon as I got home, I ordered a physical copy so I could underline and highlight and take notes to my heart’s content. As soon as it arrives, I plan to start my own happiness project.

My husband, Greg, doesn’t know it, but I snuck a little pre-happiness project application in on him as soon as I got home. Rubin notes that a lot of making ourselves happy involves keeping our lives in accord with others. (By the way, Rubin doesn’t claim to have discovered any of this, she just did a lot of research and put it all in one place.) For example, most married couples know it takes much less effort to keep the peace than to restore harmony, but sometimes we can’t resist pointing out our partner’s faults or rehashing a tired argument. Rubin reminds us that in order to be happier, we need to forgo our immediate gratification (pointing out our “rightness” in an argument) if we want to up our happiness quotient in the long run.

Rubin laments throughout the book that she seemed to be devoting a lot of effort to her happiness project and wondered if that was a good use of her time. In the end, though, both she and I agree that there really can’t be a *better* use of it. We only get this one chance at happiness and we only have so much time. In the end, is there a better way to spend it than trying to get happy?

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