

Family Happiness Handbook

Happiness
Alliance



CONTENTS



PRINCIPLES



HABITS



HORSEMEN

Chapter One: PRINCIPLES



3 principles



for happiness
in families
& life.



**Based on Gary Chapman's
Five Languages of Love**

Principle #1

Do no harm with words

Speak,



Act & Be Love



**Use words to express
encouragement
appreciation
gratitude**





as often as possible.

A close-up, profile view of a woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a blue top. She has a somber or thoughtful expression, looking downwards. The lighting is soft, highlighting her features against a dark background.

Life is hard enough

**and family should be a
source of support and
feeling good about
yourself.**

I appreciate
you.

You are a good
person.

What a good job
you have done!

You are
beautiful.

I love you.

I am so
proud of
you.

Thank you for
everything you do.

I really admire
you. Let me tell
you why.

It is a joy to
have you in
my life.



Principle #2

Be as generous as you can



and then a little more.



Be generous with your time.



Be generous with acts of service.





Be generous with your praise.



Be generous with gifts.



Principle #3

Touch



**hug, hold, snuggle,
cuddle, enfold,
cherish, envelop,
encircle, pet, pat,
massage...touch**




Without touch, babies do not survive.



(A study conducted in 1944 to determine whether infants could survive without affection resulted in the death of babies who were not touched. Further studies by researcher Harlow on monkeys confirmed the need for touch and loving attachment.)



**Without touch, children
are vulnerable to abuse.**



Touch should always be consensual.

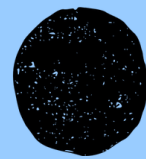
Even small children should have the option of not being hugged, cuddled, held snuggled, etc.

Touch guidelines:

Ask first.

No means no.

Never insist.



Sexual touch should only be for sexually mature people in consensual relationships.



**Never between adults
and children.**



Chapter Two:



HABITS

The first chapter of the Family Happiness Handbook presents principles that you can use as a basis for new habits.

Employ these principles with family members and with your self-talk (the words you use when thinking about yourself).



Habits take about 21 days to form.

At first, new behaviors may feel uncomfortable or insincere. Give yourself time to form your habit. Remember: progress not perfection

Over time, it will feel natural and become normal for you.



**Sticks and stones may break your bones,
but words can hurt forever.**

Words have incredible power.



**They shape your feelings, your ideas
about yourself, your expectations, and
your world view.**

They can heal and they can hurt.



The third chapter of the Family Happiness Handbook lays out four toxic habits and pathways for replacing them with loving habits.



If you have a habit of expressing yourself in harmful ways, be honest with yourself about the harm intended. Take notice of the harm your words produce. Make a vow to yourself to change your habitual way of talking from harmful to helpful – genuinely, honestly and lovingly helpful.

Chapter Three: HORSEMEN



4 ways of using speech
you should **never** use
with your family.



Based on Gottman's Four
Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

Don't do it.

Don't do it.

Don't do it.

Don't do it.

Contempt

Criticism

Defensiveness

Stonewalling

#1: Never speak with contempt

Contemptuous expressions come in many forms. It is based in feelings of hatred or aversion:

Belittling

Disrespect

Disdain

Depreciation

Scorn

Slighting

Disgust

Derision

Mockery

Mean Humor

Disparagement

Sarcasm

Put downs

Hatred

Body language counts.

Contempt is often expressed with one side of the mouth raised, eyes narrowed, and body turned away. When not sure, try mirroring body language of another to determine their feelings.

The background of the entire page is a solid light purple color. Scattered throughout the page are numerous small, dark red hearts of varying sizes and orientations. Some are clustered together, while others are isolated. The hearts are positioned around the text, with some appearing to float or be part of the text's decorative elements.

Instead of Contempt: Express Appreciation

When feelings of contempt arise, pause.

Find a way to flip the situation in your heart.

Search for the good in the person you are speaking to.

Remind yourself of why you love them.

Express gratitude.

Instead of...

You don't know what you are talking about.

What were you thinking?

I can't believe how stupid you are.

You are worthless.

You can't take a joke.

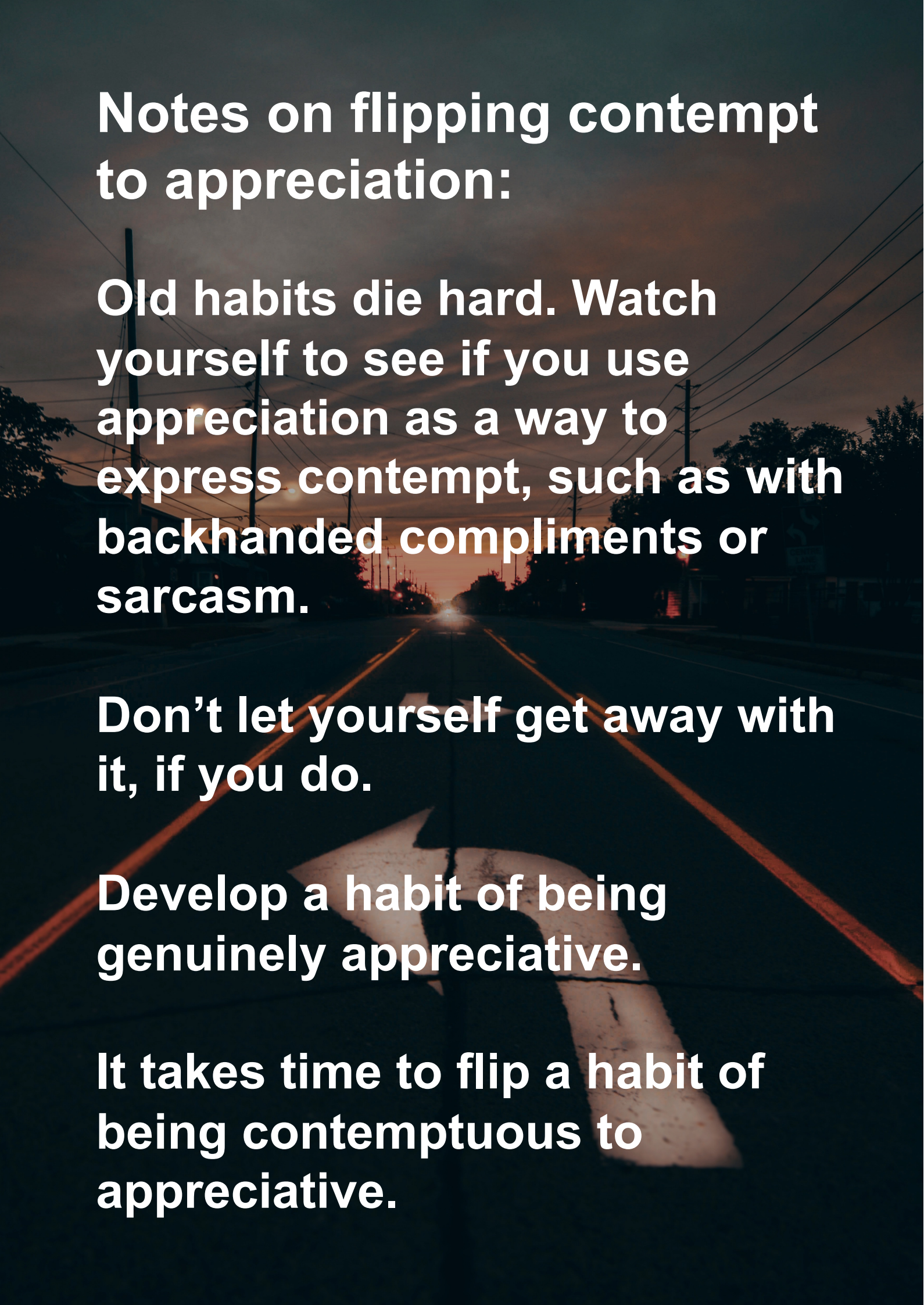
...this:

You are so
smart.

You are really
good at that.

Thank you.
I appreciate
you.

You are
beautiful.




Notes on flipping contempt to appreciation:

Old habits die hard. Watch yourself to see if you use appreciation as a way to express contempt, such as with backhanded compliments or sarcasm.

Don't let yourself get away with it, if you do.

Develop a habit of being genuinely appreciative.

It takes time to flip a habit of being contemptuous to appreciative.

A close-up photograph of a human hand, palm facing the viewer. The palm is covered in a vibrant, multi-colored rainbow spectrum, with colors ranging from purple and blue on the left to yellow and orange on the right. The background is a soft, out-of-focus gradient of light colors. The text is overlaid on the image in a clean, white, sans-serif font.

It takes diligence, honesty with yourself, and self-awareness to transform the habit of contempt into appreciation, but it will pay off.

Contempt is often a defense against fear of failure or fear of not being accepted or valued.

Appreciation gets you what your heart wants.

#2: Never criticize

Criticism comes in many forms. It often is based in a desire to help someone or change them.

Correcting

Attacking

Aggression

Uninvited advice

Uninvited helpful statements

Uninvited suggestions for improvements

Questioning without real desire to understand (more like an inquisition)

Note: Keep mindful of the intent and situation when giving advice, suggestions, etc. When invited and wanted, and spoken with love, the same words that would be critical can be loving and helpful.

Instead of Criticizing: Focus on Your Needs Instead of Their Flaws.

**When the desire to criticize arises,
ask yourself what your unmet needs
are in the moment.**

**Speak with “I statements” to state your
needs.**

Needs include:

Acceptance

Empathy

Touch

Love

Play

Hope

Ease

Order

Space

Purpose

Presence

Participation

Independence

To see and be seen

To understand and be understood



Instead of...

You can't do anything right.

You should have done that a different way.

You are all messed up.

Could be better.

Who does that?

...this:

I need to
feel
included.

I need to hear
some good
things about me.

I need to
understand and
be understood.

I need to
feel that I
matter.

Note on needs:

Expressing needs does not imply someone else is responsible for meeting them.

It's okay to ask someone to meet your needs, but not to expect them to meet your needs.





It takes courage to express your needs. It may feel safer to be critical or contemptuous, but in the end, being unpleasant ensures you will not get your needs met. Being appreciative and vulnerable opens you up to love.

#3: Never be defensive

Defensiveness comes in many forms:

Minimizing

Rationalizing

Explaining

Justifying

“Yes-But” statements

Denying

Blaming

Yelling

Attacking

Counter-attacking

Defensiveness often comes from a feeling of being attacked, which may or may not actually be the case, and a feeling of not being good enough, valued or appreciated. It is also often based on taking things people say personally. It is hard but helpful to remind yourself that most everything someone else says about you is really a reflection of them and their thinking.

Instead of Being Defensive:



Stop and Listen.

Seek to Understand.

See things from their side.

Take Responsibility.

**Validate what they said by
letting them know you heard
and understood, even if you
do not agree.**



Instead of...

Let me explain...

I never said that. You said that.

It is not my fault. I did not mean to do that.

That may be the case, but...

It's not a big deal.

...this:

I think I understand what you are saying. Can I paraphrase what you said to make sure I got it right?

I am sorry. I won't do that anymore.

I want to listen to you and find a way we can work this out.

I made a mistake. I apologize.

Note on going from defensive to understanding and taking responsibility:

Defensiveness is often rooted in fear. Fear of not being enough. Fear of not being accepted. Fear of getting hurt.

It takes a lot of effort to learn to become aware of your own feelings and replace reactive defensiveness with open responses and owning what is yours. And for most people, it takes help from a good friend, talk therapist, the right al-anon meeting for you, and other resources to re-learn childhood habitual ways of reacting out of fear instead of responding in love.

A few words about using words:

Most of us do not learn how to listen in ways that are loving and do no harm.

One way to learn how to listen better is called Active Listening. Active Listening proposes steps for listening:

- 1. Give the speaker your undivided attention.**
- 2. Show you are listening with your body language and facial expression. Reflect the listeners feelings with your body and face.**
- 3. Defer judgement or input until you fully understand.**
- 4. Check that you understand by paraphrasing what you heard.**
- 5. When you do not understand, request clarification.**
- 6. Ask open ended questions, being careful that your questions are intended to understand, not to judge.**
- 7. Respond only once the speaker agrees you fully understand.**



A few more words about using words:

Like with listening, most of us do not learn how to speak in ways that are loving and do no harm. This is often especially true for difficult situations.

One way to learn to speak without doing harm is called Non-Violent Communication, developed by Marshall Rosenberg. It involves four steps:

- 1. Observations**
- 2. Feelings**
- 3. Needs**
- 4. Requests**

The tricky part is taking each step simply and cleanly, and without blame, criticism, judgement or other harmful intent or hard feelings.

Steps for NVC:

First, make an observation using an “I statement” that just explains what you see, hear, remember, or imagine.

Such as “I see your arms are folded in front of you” instead of “I see you are angry” (this is a judgement).

Second, state how you are feeling in simple terms without including what you think about things. Such as “I feel afraid” instead of “I feel like you are going to start a fight” (this is a judgement).

Third, state only one need in simple terms. Such as “I need to be understood” instead of “I need you to understand me this time” (a judgement based on history is hidden in this statement).

Fourth, make a simple request, not a demand. Such as “Would you be willing to use active listening for five or ten minutes while I listen to you, and then you listen to me using active listening for the same amount of time?” instead of “Would you be quiet for a minute and just listen to me?”

#4: Never stonewall

Stonewalling starts with refusing to consider another person's perspective. It has many forms:

Stalling

Ignoring

Being too busy all the time.

Always saying no.

Failing to follow through on something you agree to do.

Refusing to have dialogue and/or refusing to take action.

Holding up a process without intention for resolution and progress.

Saying no without discussion.

Saying you will come back to it later and then not doing so.

Saying you are feeling overwhelmed or crying regularly to get out of discussions.

Agreeing without intending to act on your agreement.

Stonewalling can be a way of dealing with fear of conflict and/or fear of being abused. It can also be a way of being aggressive without appearing so.

Instead of Stonewalling:

Take some time to do things that are soothing and healthy every day.

When a discussion gets heated or you start to feel overwhelmed, tell the other person you need to take a time out but will be back to participate in the discussion. Take 30 minutes alone doing something healthy that calms you down. Then fulfill your commitment to continuing the discussion then or when you arrange to do so.

Be honest with yourself when you find yourself stonewalling as a habit.

Invest in your own happiness with a talk therapist, talking regularly with someone who loves you and will listen without judgement, or going to the right al-anon meeting for you so you can: Process past traumas. Learn how to have and maintain healthy boundaries. Learn how to take responsibility in healthy loving ways.



Instead of...

Now is not
a good
time.

Please just leave
me alone. I can't
handle it.

Stop
nagging me.

I've had it. I
am leaving.

Do what
ever you
want.

End of
conversation.

Please stop
talking. I am
getting a
headache.

...this:

Let's talk
about this.
I am here
to listen.

I think I
understand what
you want to do.
How can I help?

I am willing to
work with you
to find a way
that is good for
both of us.

I will do what I
agreed to do,
and I will do it
now. (And
then do it.)

I am sorry I
held things up.
That won't
happen again.

Let's talk
about it and
I will listen
with an
open heart

Thoughts on Stonewalling

For most people, it is hard to acknowledge stonewalling because they are not aware that they are doing it. Most people feel that they are being victimized. This feeling is often based on past traumas.

Stonewalling may feel like a good way of keeping yourself from getting hurt again, but it is also a way of keeping yourself from being loved, and from loving.

It takes great courage and a lot of work to come to terms with yourself when you are unaware that you have a habit of stonewalling.

Stonewalling and Conflict

Stonewalling is often used as a way to avoid conflict. Every relationship has some conflict. Healthy conflict can strengthen relationships which increases your happiness.

Steps for healthy conflict:

1. Stay calm. Take a time out if someone gets upset.
2. Do not engage in harmful or negative talk.
3. Focus on what you do want, not what you don't want.
4. Allow the other person to talk.
5. Share concerns.
6. Ask question to understand the other person.
7. Take breaks to digest and reflect.
8. Be creative about solutions.
9. Find something to agree upon.
10. Continue dialogue even after you find agreement.

The Family Happiness Handbook was written in response to low scores among people who live in families with children compared to people without children.

The Happiness Alliance's Happiness Index is a scientifically valid instrument that measures happiness and well-being along the domains of happiness: culture, community, economy, education and life long learning, environment, government, health, psychological health, satisfaction with life, social support, time balance and work.

Data from the Happiness Alliance's Happiness Index reflects lower levels of happiness among people with families compared to people without children. The data are gathered from a convenience sampling, but the results are similar to those gathered by random samplings conducted with happiness survey instruments that use the same or very similar questions.

While the data says people in families are less happy, when asked the question "what makes you happy in one word?" the most frequent answer is "family." Everybody has a family, and family forms our untrained capacity for happiness to a great extent.

The Happiness Alliance hopes that the Happiness Family Handbook will contribute to a deeper happiness experienced in families, and to the awakening of happiness in all beings.

**You deserve to be
happy.**



Our mission is to awaken happiness in all beings.



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