

THIS IS YOUR YEAR!

Readers about Ben Tiggelaar

“Ben Tiggelaar is truly able to inspire people. He combines theory and practice in a highly professional way.”

“Ben Tiggelaar knows how to get people moving.”

“Tiggelaar’s method is an eye opener.”

“At last somebody who goes a couple of steps further than most change gurus... Ben Tiggelaar reveals the pain of personal behavioral change in an entertaining way.”

“A few memorable rules that soon lead to demonstrable results.”

“I have often wondered why we, people in general, often know exactly what we should change, and *want* to change it, but don’t. Tiggelaar was a revelation: I now work out four times a week, work with discipline and am able to relax better.”

Reviewers about Ben Tiggelaar

“I have read Tiggelaar with great pleasure. With the writer’s striking examples, there’s no getting away from the question: how does this apply to me?”

“The power lies in the openness of Tiggelaar’s vision and the underlying theory, and in his structured and pragmatic method.”

“Well-founded, entertaining, concrete, filled with concrete examples and tips.”

“As always, Ben Tiggelaar managed to make the scientific foundations comprehensible to the world.”

“It gives you the courage and inspiration to finally do what you *really* want.”

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This is your year!

In the Netherlands alone , millions of people resolve to change something in their lives every year. After a holiday, after an unusual experience or at the start of a new job, study or calendar year, we all want to give a positive boost to our lives. To take a step forwards in our careers; to feel better in our bodies; to find a better balance between work and home.

Most attempts fail miserably. The wishes of the majority of the people will not be fulfilled. And in businesses, most efforts to change come to nothing. How can that be?

The primary reason: we know too little of the workings of our own behavior.

For instance, the majority thinks that changing is about ‘will power’ or ‘perseverance’. It might sound plausible, but in virtually all cases, ‘to want something’ is not enough for taking the step towards behavior and results. And ‘perseverance’ is not at all one specific ability, but rather the sum of a large number of skills.

On the other hand, there is a significant amount of scientific research on the relationship between goals and results.

Behavioral scientists know quite well how to come to intentions that *can* be realized. We also know which change techniques are most effective.

In this book, I want to help you apply this knowledge in a fun and practical way, to form your goals, to take action and to achieve results.

As opposed to my last book on this subject -*Dream, Dare, Do*- I will also pay ample attention to determining your course. Which dreams and wishes are *really* worth the effort? Choose with care and you will

immediately increase your chances of a successful realization of your intentions.

Another point that will be discussed is how to effectively help other people manage themselves -privately or professionally.

Additionally, this book contains numerous new examples of, insights into and advice on the field of change and growth.

Right. Most people find it difficult to turn wishes into results. But a small percentage *does* succeed. What do these people do differently from the rest? What do scientists have to say about this? And what practical tips can we gather from this?

This book answers all of these questions. So you can make the next twelve months become your year.

Ben Tiggelaar

1 Happiness is a matter of doing

- What makes us -truly- happy?
- Can you enhance your own happiness?
- The remarkable role of money

“What would you do with 27.5 million euros? Tax free...”

I’m talking to a colleague about the news article we both read this morning. Ten employees of a company in the province of Zeeland won the ‘jackpot’ in the Dutch state lottery together.

“Be honest, Ben. If you had 27.5 million on your bank account, would you return to your job? I think most people would quit immediately.”

A few days later, Paul, the oldest of the ten jackpot winners, explains. He tells a journalist from newspaper *Provinciale Zeeuwse Courant* that he will retire earlier, but that the nine colleagues will simply continue working for the company. “I am the oldest of the bunch. The others are much younger, with kids growing up. They say: what are we supposed to do? Sit around on the couch or something?”

The core

This chapter is about the question of what makes us happy. *If* in the next twelve months some dreams are sure to come true, what would be the wise decision?

My colleague’s question, what would I do with a 27.5 million prize, is not that strange at all. Even though you and I will probably never win such an amount (unfortunately, you have a much greater chance of having a traffic accident than winning the ‘regular’ first prize in the state lottery), such a prize still means something to us...

These astronomic amounts will still make you dream an astronomic dream. What if anything was possible? What if no laws and practical objections were in the way?

What would you want? What would you change? Who would you like to meet? Where would you like to go? What things would you finally want to try?

Ferrari or carriage?

Large money prizes come in handy when stimulating our imagination, but they are not that important. Firstly, because it is scientifically proven that my grandmother was right: riches make no man happy. More specifically: more riches make no man happier.

Researcher *Edward Diener* and colleagues for instance compared the feeling of happiness in superrich Americans, those from the *Forbes 400* list, to that of the *Amish*, an Orthodox Christian community that leads a very simple and traditional life. On a scale of zero to seven, both groups averaged a 5.8. Apparently, it makes no difference to your happiness whether you move around in a Ferrari or in a carriage.

Furthermore, the first prize in the lottery is completely irrelevant for another reason. The fact is, we all have the ability -even without large amounts of money- to change important things in our lives. To put it more elegantly: we all possess a treasure that is much more valuable than the lottery jackpot.

Humans are the only living creatures on this earth that can consciously make plans for their future and are able, through their behavior, to realize these plans. It's not easy, nor is it a matter of course, but we can.

How makeable is happiness?

Let me clear something up before you suspect me of too cheerful and naïve an approach. I do not believe in 100% manipulability. In recent

years, behavioral research has made increasingly clear that a considerable proportion of the things we do and experience in life, are determined genetically. Additionally, we are steered to a fair extent by the day-to-day situations we encounter.

But at the same time, people can set goals and realize those goals. Over the years, I have grown a fascination for this phenomenon. Many wishes may never come true, but they do for some people. Is that just a matter of luck? Or do these people have a different approach, one that increases the chance of their dreams coming true?

Research shows that the latter is true. It is the way in which you determine your course and the way in which you then steer your behavior that make the difference. Some ways of formulating your wishes prove to be more effective than others. They lead to a greater chance that your wishes will indeed be fulfilled. Also, some ways of managing your behavior work better than others. They create greater changes that last longer.

Annoyance and amazement

Speaking of research. The recommendations from this book are based on verifiable scientific research. Two reasons.

Reason one. Sociologist *Christine Whelan* discovered that ‘self-help books’ are mostly read by people who already have a knack for self-management and want to further develop it.

Sensible people who want to work actively on their health, their career, their work/home balance and other goals. Therefore, there is no use in trying to fool them.

Reason two is that I am annoyed and amazed at the amount of unproven claims you find in many popular books. From “if you believe in something, it will happen” to “synchronize your brainwaves to achieve ‘enlightenment’ and sleep better.” This type of claims is aimed more at

increasing print runs than they are at helping the reader to a higher well-being.

Research is often much more fun and practical than you might think. This book will discuss the following findings among others:

- The lion's share of our daily behavior comes about unconsciously and automatically.
- The best cleaners see their job as a calling.
- You can easily enhance your motivation and that of others eightfold.
- If you see change as a learning process, you stand a greater chance of success than if you simply want to achieve.
- By far the most people in companies are managed ineffectively.

What is happiness?

Does research tell us something about what makes people happy? Fortunately, it does. A few of the current insights on this subject.

According to researcher *Martin Seligman* and his colleagues from the 'positive psychology' movement, there are three kinds of happiness.

First, there is 'the pleasant life'. This type of happiness is about experiencing as many good moments as possible. A fun night with friends, a nice holiday. Happiness is a life of fun. Too bad that much of the capacity for happy-go-lucky enjoyment is innate and unchangeable.

Second, there is 'the good life'. This is about using your talents and strengths for professional and private activities. So that you don't look at the clock, but are engrossed in the things you do: 'flow' in positive psychology terms. One person experiences it while playing a musical instrument, another while working on a computer program.

Third, there is ‘the meaningful life’, in which you place yourself in service of something greater than yourself. For instance by doing volunteer work, but also by parenting or joining a social movement.

Interestingly enough, the second and third form of happiness do not necessarily mean continuous joy. But they do mean satisfaction with life as a whole.

I am quite pleased with this divide. The first type of happiness I can only bear for a while without the other two types. In my opinion, the real art is to align the three forms of happiness. To enjoy doing the things you are good at, and with that to contribute to a better world.

Happiness is what you do

How many times have you heard people sigh: “I have everything I could possibly want, and still I am not happy.” This is actually not that unusual. One of the most important recurring elements in happiness research is the express irrelevance of what you *have* as opposed to what you *do* on a daily basis. Your behavior makes you happy.

If you have all sorts of things but never do anything you enjoy or are good at, you will remain unhappy. It may be obvious, but that does not make it less true.

Sonja Lyubomirsky, one of the world’s leading happiness researchers, comes to a similar conclusion. She states that 50% of the differences in happiness that people experience can be attributed to hereditary qualities, 10% to circumstances, and 40% to the actions we take.

You can therefore make yourself happier by introducing changes in your daily behavior. What kinds of things are we talking about? Three examples...

- Showing gratitude: count your daily blessings and express your gratitude to other people.

- Be kind: do kind things for other people, whether planned or spontaneously.
- Take care of your body: work out, laugh, meditate, it all helps.

Research institute Gallup conducted a worldwide research on human well-being. Behavior plays a lead role here as well. To illustrate, the only work-related question that Gallup finds relevant to our well-being is: *do you like what you do every day?*

Behavior highlighted

Our behavior plays an essential role. Our actions contribute to a significant extent to results we find relevant, such as a good relationship, a healthy body and a successful career. Typically things money cannot buy.

But on the way to that result, behavior already adds to our happiness. Especially when we do the things we like, are good at, and that will contribute to things greater than ourselves. Isn't that a bargain.

Human behavior, I believe, is therefore a phenomenon we should study in depth. And we will in the next chapter.

Another thing about money. If you're planning on improving your financial position in the coming year, you might want to know the following. People who earn more money may not become happier. But Lyubomirsky did discover another remarkable connection: people who are happy seem to make more money more easily. Therefore: work on your happiness, then on your riches.

This is your year!

If you want to make the next twelve months become your year, keep the following three things in mind...

1. There are three levels of happiness: the pleasant life (experiencing nice moments), the good life (using your talents) and the meaningful life (being part of something that is greater than yourself).
2. Your happiness and your behavior are closely connected. It is not what you have but what you do that determines your happiness. Happiness can partly be 'made' with your behavior.
3. Money and happiness are interestingly linked. Riches do not lead to happiness, but happiness does lead to riches.

About Ben Tiggelaar

Dr Ben Tiggelaar (1969) is a researcher and writer in the field of management, change and human behavior. He obtained his doctorate with a study on behavior-oriented organizational change.

He is known as one of the absolute top speakers and trainers in his field of expertise.

Ben has written several books on management and change, of which *Dream, Dare, Do* is the most widely read. The book became an international bestseller.

He additionally writes columns for various magazines.

For the latest information, the free workbook and other additions to *This Is Your Year!*, visit www.tiggelaar.nl.