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top executive coach and business consultant

WANT CAN MUST

Discover Yourself and Take Action!

Марина Мелия. Психология успеха

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Want – Can – Must: Discover Yourself and Take Action!

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Marina Melia offers transformative psychological tools for self-development—tested and refined through decades of practical experience. Carefully selected, updated, and brought together in this book, they form a unique personal method you can use without the help of a professional counsellor. The book Want—Can—Must will help you: • Discover your life script and see if you can change it • Understand how your favorite childhood story has shaped your destiny • Uncover what holds you back from making decisions—and why • Recognize your strengths and how to rely on them • Learn how to do what you truly want, and be happy В формате PDF A4 сохранен издательский макет книги.

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And yet we keep posing the clever answer Without ever finding the right question.
– Vladimir Vysotsky

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Forging Our Own Path to Happiness

We all want to be happy. In our attempts to build a better life, we buy books, attend lectures, and sign up for workshops. Yet the advice we receive, alas, doesn't always help – because the happiness we seek isn't universal or one-size-fits-all. It's something unique, hand-forged. That, to me, is the true meaning of the Russian saying:

"Every man is the blacksmith of his own happiness."

A happy life is the product of our own creation, and to become happy, we must first understand what happiness means for us personally.

This might seem so obvious that hardly anyone would disagree. But then why do we so often forge our happiness while looking over our shoulders at others – using someone else's blueprint and following imposed templates?

Because humans are social beings, and we belong to a society with its own standards and established notions, including ideas of happiness. It's commonly believed that happiness is, above all, success. The typical model dictates that we should have a certain status, income level, family, home, children, and circle of friends. Within this conventional package of success, of course, there's room for variation – the size of the house, the number of children, the prestige of the schools they attend.

But overall, the checklist is largely universal. If something on our list is missing, we feel as though happiness has passed us by.

Society can be insidious, pressuring us through the people who matter to us:

A wife sighs sadly every time she gets into the old car.

A school friend invites us on a trip to the Maldives that's financially out of reach.

A former classmate posts a status update on Facebook to boast about yet another high-level promotion.

We feel we're letting our loved ones down, failing to meet their expectations – and so we join the race for that elusive success.

Yet, many "accomplished and affluent" people who seem to have everything on the checklist are often deeply dissatisfied with their lives.

One person chasing status built a brilliant career but now feels trapped and restless because there's no chance to do real, meaningful work in the profession they love.

Another gave up her job to create the perfect family. Now her home is filled with all the trappings of comfort, but neither comfort nor financial security brings her joy; she's in despair because her life is entirely centred on her husband's interests.

A third strove for fame and popularity, only to realise – after finally becoming an Instagram queen – that taking selfies, posting about purchases, and recording videos several times a week has become unbearable. She has no real profession and doesn't know how to do anything else.

Sometimes a person spends their whole life striving for success – and thus, they believe, for happiness – only to suddenly realise they've been running after the wrong thing.

What do unhappy people have in common?

Regardless of money or status, they all share a sense that their lives lack fullness; they're missing positive emotions.

How can they get them back?

The simple answer is: live your own life. Stop trying to fit the model that's being imposed on you.

The psychologist Erich Fromm wrote that our actions are guided by two kinds of conscience.

The first is the authoritarian conscience – it pushes us to meet the expectations of others: our immediate circle and society at large.

The second is the humanistic conscience. This is our inner voice, urging us to follow our own principles and aspirations, sometimes even against the wishes of those around us.

When we ignore the call of this second conscience, we immediately feel that something is wrong.

Everything seems fine on the surface, yet a vague sense of unease lingers – the thrill is gone, interest in life has faded, and nothing sparks desire. We understand something needs to change.

There are moments in every life when we find ourselves at a crossroads. We know that a crisis presents both problems and opportunities, yet we rarely admit – even to ourselves – that we are in the midst of one. "It's not so bad," we tell ourselves. "I'm just tired, had a fight with a friend, my wife is getting on my nerves, work is overwhelming. Otherwise, everything's fine." This is a perfectly adequate defence mechanism we build to avoid making changes because every system seeks equilibrium, and humans are no exception. Moreover, we must weigh our actions against the interests of those who depend on us. After all, even if our current life brings no joy, what guarantee is there that change will be for the better?

To admit we've reached a dead end is to acknowledge we've been on the wrong path. Does that mean our life has been wasted? No. A crisis is just that – a crisis. It does not devalue the past. Our achievements are what brought us to this point. We devoted years to education, work, and family; we gained wisdom, developed useful skills, fell in love, forged friendships, travelled, and read books – all of these matter. Furthermore, we have built a foundation from which we can now move forward.

Recognising the need for change does not mean we must immediately tear down everything we have built up to this moment. It simply means it is time to pause, to reflect on ourselves and our true desires, and to envision a future. Therefore, it is worth understanding what drives and governs us. In such situations, I often suggest to my clients a framework for self-analysis based on the triad of "Want – Can – Must." I call it the strategic self-determination triad.

Let's start with Want. Answering the question, "What do I want?" turns out to be not so simple. Each of us harbours deep-seated aspirations that are often so suppressed and buried that we forget the most intimate longings of our soul. We hesitate to admit our desires to ourselves, and like an underground river, they erode the structure of our lives. That is why it is crucial to uncover what lies buried and plastered over – what it is that gives us no peace.

It is worth re-evaluating the components of the standard package of well-being imposed upon us and asking: What truly interests me? What brings joy and fulfilment? Where and how do I wish to fully realise myself? We may not be able to articulate our Want immediately. Happiness, after all, shies away from rigid definitions. It cannot be forced into the Procrustean bed of strict specifics – metrics, numbers, reports, deadlines. Happiness is what we are willing to strive for.

But how can we be sure this Want is genuinely ours and not a construct assembled from other people's "right" ideals? Let's ask ourselves: What would I do if there were no family, loans, mortgages, or obligations? To what extent do my aspirations resonate with my true Self?

Once we clarify our Want, a whole new horizon opens up. Life begins to fill with substance, creative force, and positive energy. Our Want guides all our actions, stimulates growth, and simultaneously prompts the search for possibilities.

When we bring our Want into the light and fully acknowledge it, the time comes to sort out our Can: to understand our real potential, talents, life and professional experience, what we lack, and what we need to adjust in order to realise our Want. For instance, we may possess talents but lack the knowledge and skills to bring them to life. Or perhaps deep-seated beliefs and prejudices formed in childhood are holding us back from achieving what we desire. Our Want will lead us to success only if it is aimed at expanding the boundaries of our Can, at self-realisation, and unlocking our potential. When this condition is met, we experience wonderful moments of creative uplift, feel positive emotions, and sense a surge of energy, especially when we've overcome another hurdle. Then,

some of our *I can't* easily transform into *I can*, our self-respect grows, and new incentives for self-development emerge.

It is equally important to define the third element of the triad – our Must: how much demand is there for what we want to do? There's no need to fear this question. Even if it seems that our envisioned path is needed by no one, that is not a reason to abandon the dream. Perhaps the right time has simply not yet come. We just need to keep this aspect in view. The crucial thing is to understand whether our activity is fundamentally useful; this is precisely what allows us to feel needed and connected to other people, ideas, and values.

The unity of Want – Can – Must fills life with meaning, gives us a sense of internal order and equilibrium, and at the same time allows us to operate at the edge of our capabilities, overcome obstacles, and rise to a new level.

Often, we simply don't know how to realise our dream or how to even approach it. We don't want to look strange or ridiculous; we're afraid of ending up in the role of a failure, of risking what we have for a grander but uncertain prize. In this difficult situation, taking the first step (even if it's barely noticeable) is vital. But what exactly should that step be?

First and foremost, to better understand our Want – Can – Must, we need a deep understanding of ourselves. For this, I recommend specific psychological tools that I consider profound and effective. These are not tests that, once filled out, yield quantitative scores of your personality or life satisfaction – in my view, these offer little to a thinking person. Instead, I propose examining your life from different angles: identifying your life script, revisiting your childhood and favourite fairy tales, reflecting on your relationship with money and time, on motivation, on how you make decisions, and on how you react to success.

These seemingly introspective reflections are, in fact, profoundly practical. They help us construct a multidimensional image of ourselves. We begin to see and feel our characteristics, our uniqueness – what truly sets us apart from others. It becomes clear to us why, for instance, we acted one way in the past but chose differently today. We recognise how our desires, capabilities, and limitations have led us to the point where we now stand. We gain clarity on where to move next, what we genuinely want, what we are capable of, and what we have the power to offer the world.

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