

Code to Joy

The Four-Step Solution to Unlocking Your Natural State of Happiness

by George Pratt, Ph.D., and Peter Lambrou, Ph.D., with John David Mann

Joy Within Reach

Heal the past to secure your healthy future.

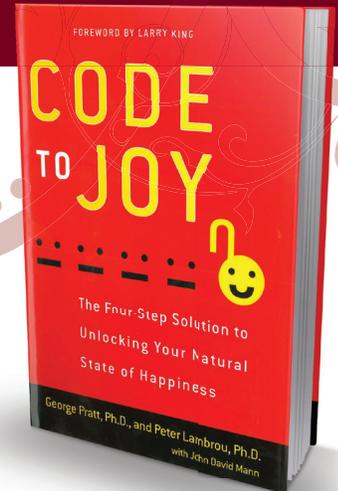
QUICK OVERVIEW

If you're deeply unhappy with your life, chances are you can trace the reason to your childhood. That's the premise of *Code to Joy: The Four-Step Solution to Unlocking Your Natural State of Happiness*, by clinical psychologists George Pratt and Peter Lambrou, with writer John David Mann. The authors offer a hopeful and practical perspective on healing past wounds.

Using real-life case studies from their own practice, the authors remind readers they're not alone, and expose the seemingly unbreakable link between childhood trauma and adult pain. Most important, they shine a light on the seven limiting beliefs that hold so many people in their grip. But they don't stop there. The authors provide readers with a pathway to happiness through their four-step process of mining personal memories, listening to one's body, embracing new and positive beliefs and anchoring those healthy beliefs permanently to your life.

APPLY AND ACHIEVE

The authors suggest readers compile a gratitude list. At first, this simple task might seem a bit cliché, but it actually presents quite a challenge. The idea is to start with one dozen to two dozen items, listing a variety of blessings, from friends and family to health and shelter. Then read it or review it at roughly the same time every day, and each day add a new item. Dig deeply and really think about what you're thankful for. If followed for an entire year, this process could produce a list of almost 400 blessings. More important, Lambrou and Pratt say, the act of exercising one's gratitude muscle can "profoundly change your brain." You are literally programming a portion of your brain to look for what's right about your life instead of what's wrong. It's the reticular activating system (RAS), and it filters all the sensory information our brains draw from the world. As you retrain your RAS, your brain makes a subtle shift in priorities. In short, you become more aware of those things in your life that are positive. And who wouldn't benefit from a more positive outlook? Start your list today and keep adding to it.



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SUCCESS Points

This book will teach you how to:

- Identify painful events from your past
- Replace your limiting beliefs with empowering beliefs
- Use neuromuscular feedback and breathing exercises to explore your subconscious mind
- Retrain your brain to be more grateful
- Enjoy nature to bring calm and renewal into your life

SUMMARY

Code to Joy

A few years ago a woman named Stefanie came to our office seeking treatment. In the course of our first visit, she asked us a question she had been trying to answer for decades. It's a question millions of people have asked throughout history. Maybe you have asked it yourself.

Stefanie's history, we soon learned, was a rags-to-riches success story. Growing up in a poor family, she took a job in her teens as an office assistant for an advertising company. Working her way up through the ranks, she eventually reached the top, so that by her mid-forties she had become CEO and majority owner of the firm. Stefanie also had a rich personal life. A kind and generous woman, she was active in the community where she lived with her husband, proud parents of two healthy, thriving kids.

In fact, Stefanie appeared to have been living a charmed life in every way—except for one thing: she was deeply unhappy. As she began describing her situation, it became clear that this dark cloud followed her into every corner of her life.

By all accounts she was a great mother, but she didn't feel like a great mother. She also felt deeply guilty about the collapse of a previous marriage many years earlier, and that guilt hovered over her like the gloom of an overcast sky. Her health was affected, too: now in her fifties, Stefanie was having severe stomach and digestive problems and had recently undergone back surgery for a bad disc. Despite all her successes, that dark cloud had also cast its shadow over her professional world. After a series of management mishaps, Stefanie's advertising company had recently slipped into bankruptcy.

"I've seen psychiatrists here in California," she said, "and in New York, and in London. I've been on every antidepressant. I've read all the books and articles about mood issues. I've read everything and tried everything, but that unhappiness still persists—and I don't know why. Everyone tells me I have nothing to complain about and everything to be grateful for. And I know they're right. But knowing that doesn't make it better."

And then Stefanie asked The Question:

"Why aren't I happy?"

In a million different versions, Stefanie's question echoes throughout our society and within virtually everyone we know.

**Denial leaves you powerless.
Acceptance empowers you.**

You probably have your own version.

It's a puzzle we've been pursuing for decades—and the answer turns out to have something to do with how water turns into fog.

THE FOG OF DISTRESS

Imagine you are standing just outside your home, surrounded by a dense fog, so thick you can't see the other side of the street in front of you. How much water do you suppose it takes to create that blanket of fog that has completely isolated you from your world?

Before you read on, think about this for a moment. Don't worry if you're not good at math or have no background in physics. Just take a commonsense guess. How much water do you think it took to create this fog that surrounds you?

Now, are you ready for the answer? A few ounces. The total volume of water in a blanket of fog one acre around and one meter deep would not quite fill an ordinary drinking glass.

How is this possible? First the water evaporates, and the resulting vapor then condenses into minuscule droplets that permeate the air. In that one-acre block of fog, one drinking glass's worth of water disperses as some 400 billion tiny droplets suspended in the air, creating an impenetrable cloak that shuts out light and makes you shiver.

This is exactly what happens with certain painful or difficult experiences.

Most of the time, when negative events occur, we are able to learn from them, shrug them off, and go on with our lives. Sometimes, especially when we are very young, we have experiences that we cannot shake. Even if they seem insignificant, no more substantial than a glass of water, when these upsetting experiences evaporate, they then condense into billions of droplets of anger, fear, self-doubt, guilt, and other negative feelings, surrounding us with a suffocating blanket that suffuses every aspect of our lives for years to come.

We call this the fog of distress.

Typically, this vague sense of unease parks itself in the background, like the annoying hum of a refrigerator or air conditioner we have learned to block out from our conscious awareness. Over the years, that background hum can sabotage our careers, friendships, marriages. Sometimes, as with Stefanie, even our physical health starts to suffer.

For some, this fog of distress shows up in very distinct and specific ways, such as an unshakable fear or irrational anxiety,

a problem in one particular area of life. For others, like Stefanie, it is more vague and generalized. That is, it's not that any one specific thing is so terribly wrong. It's more that nothing is quite right.

This is why Stefanie's efforts hadn't given her any relief. Psychotherapeutic drugs, like antidepressants or anti-anxiety medications, cannot disperse that fog; at best, they can somewhat blunt its impact. Talking it over, whether with friends, counselors, or therapists, won't disperse it either, because it doesn't yield to reason and logical analysis. Trying to "talk it through" is like trying to reach an underwater cave by driving around the city streets. No matter how long you drive or which route you take, you won't get there. We have to get out of the car, get off the streets and into the water, and swim a different route altogether.

Fortunately, such a path exists. Over the past decade, we have adapted our approach into a simple protocol that you can administer yourself.

Step 1: Identify your strongest self-limiting beliefs.

Step 2: Rebalance your body's energy system and prepare it for repatterning.

Step 3: Release negative beliefs and install new empowering beliefs in their place.

Step 4: Ensure that the results of the first three steps are deep and long-lasting.

These four steps—identify, clear, repattern, anchor—form the core of *Code to Joy*. By the time Stefanie left our office that day, the dark cloud was gone. That was several years ago. It has not returned.

THE IMPACT OF TRAUMA

You are walking through a field, munching absentmindedly on a snack. The sun is out, the air is balmy. A light breeze at your back. Life is good.

Suddenly you hear an earthshaking crash.

Startled, you look up at the horizon just in time to see a gigantic plume of ash and dust volcanoing up into the sky and spreading out to form a gigantic cloud that will persist for days, weeks, perhaps years. It will blot out the sun and completely change your world. Chances are, you will not live to see it dissipate.

Oh, one more detail: you are a dinosaur.

Scientists tell us it was an asteroid striking Earth millions of years ago that caused the death of the dinosaurs. The

impact threw so much debris into the atmosphere, they say, that it darkened the skies and transformed the climate into what is sometimes termed nuclear winter, so named because a similar effect would result from the explosion of a series of nuclear bombs.

Traumatic Resonance

If you pluck the low E-string on a guitar, you'll see the high E-string vibrate along with it, thrumming as if it had been plucked by a phantom finger. This happens because the specific vibration rate of the high E (660 Hz) is an even multiple of the E two octaves lower (165 Hz). In other words, they are not identical, but they sound closely similar. The same thing happens if you hold a tuning fork next to a piano and strike the key for A above middle C: the tuning fork will vibrate, too.

This is called resonance, a word that literally means "sounds again."

Musical notes are not the only things composed of vibrations: so are thoughts and feelings, events and circumstances—and the same principle applies. If you hear an idea or opinion that you are in sympathy with, you might say it resonates with you.

We often find that an early childhood experience will leave its mark and then be reinforced or reactivated by events later in life that resonate with the early event, much as the sound of a car backfiring can trigger the traumatic memories of combat.

The impact of traumatic personal events can have the same kind of effect, darkening the skies of our own outlook and causing a chilling effect that permeates every aspect of our lives.

To see how this happens, let's return for a moment to our first office visit with our client Stefanie, whom we met in the introduction.

Stefanie's First Quarter

In the course of our conversation, Stefanie mentioned a number of events throughout her life that had had an impact on her. As we asked about her childhood, she had a sudden thought.

"Well, this one time, when I was seven, I helped my aunt move some furniture around one afternoon. When we were finished,

she thanked me and paid me a quarter. I hadn't expected to be paid, and I was thrilled. It was the first money I'd ever earned." She shook her head slowly. "You know, I haven't thought about this for, oh, probably decades." She paused, letting the distant memory replay itself. "I was so proud. I couldn't wait to tell my family. I bolted home, ran inside, told my folks about it, and held up the quarter for them to see.

"They were shocked. 'What did you think you were doing?!' they hissed at me. 'You never take money from family!'

"I was crushed." She paused again, as if lost in the memory, then added, "I felt so humiliated."

Her parents no doubt meant well; they were only trying to pass on what they considered their good family values. But the message Stefanie took from the experience was fused into her being: It's wrong and shameful to make money.

YOUR STORY

The first step in the Four-Step Process is to identify the nature of your personal fog of distress, and that starts with finding the asteroid strikes in your own past.

Let's start by just relaxing for a moment and letting your mind amble back through your earliest memories.

- Ask yourself: What painful or unpleasant events or experiences do I remember from my childhood that had a strong or deep impact on me?
- Ask a relative or family member, someone who knew you from early childhood, if anything significant happened to you that you might not remember.
- Write it down. If you're curious about it, if it doesn't feel entirely resolved, or even if it simply sticks out in your mind for no apparent reason—write it down.

Seven Limiting Beliefs

When an event happens, our perception of it occurs in the form of a distinct pattern of nerve firings through specific synapses (connections). Through repetition, what started as a response to a singular event becomes progressively strengthened as our synapses grow new neural tissue, laying down an ever-thicker matrix of nerve fiber. Eventually that response pattern becomes a firmly embedded neural net that represents a fixed way of perceiving the world and events around us.

In the course of working with thousands of people in helping them to uncover their own self-limiting beliefs, we have found that

most fall into one of seven patterns, which we have come to call the seven common self-limiting beliefs:

1. I am not safe.
2. I am worthless.
3. I am powerless.
4. I am not lovable.
5. I cannot trust anyone.
6. I am bad.
7. I am alone.

**We were designed and created
to be happy.**

Using Neuromuscular Feedback

Often referred to as muscle testing or applied kinesiology, this simple process can tap into a tremendous amount of information that the person being tested may not be consciously aware of, from details on the subject's health and current state of mind to particulars about his or her own history and family dynamics.

The basic idea is that the body has an unerringly accurate and complete self-knowledge. In a way, this is common sense. We reveal it in our language. For example, when we are about to give someone some emotionally charged news, whether very good or very bad, we say, "Are you sitting down?" Why? Because we know instinctively that a strong surge of emotion can make our muscles suddenly go slack.

These are more than mere figures of speech. Strong emotional responses do have instant echoes in our neuromusculature. In fact, scientific studies have shown that the stress evoked by making an untrue statement consistently causes a weakening of the muscles of anywhere from 5 to 15 percent. This is not a huge difference, but it's distinct enough to be clearly discernible.

As a simple overview, here is how neuromuscular feedback works: you make a declarative statement while holding out your arm, and the person testing you presses down with mild but firm pressure. If your statement is true, your arm will resist the tester's push and remain in place. But if your statement is false—whether or not you are consciously aware of it—your arm will weaken slightly and give in to the tester's downward push.

Neuromuscular feedback opens a window to a whole new world of information.

You: A Walking, Talking, Rechargeable Battery

Conventional modern medicine, with its basis in physiology and anatomy and its repertoire of pharmaceuticals, surgery, and other allopathic interventions, fundamentally treats the physical body. Conventional psychology, on the other hand, fundamentally treats the mind: through talking, behavior modification, and so forth, it seeks to modify how you perceive experiences and think about things, and through this, how you structure your behaviors.

But these two approaches in themselves fail to fully address our new understanding of human health. This new model sees the human being as an organism composed of three aspects: body, mind, and biofield—a conductive medium that overlaps and integrates body and mind together.

Once you establish the intention to heal, you can trust that your mind and body know how to do the healing. All you need to do consciously is focus your intention on the positive outcome.

For simplicity's sake, in this book we use the term biofield to refer to all of these systems together as one energetic whole. Perhaps the simplest way to see the biofield, and even demonstrate its existence for yourself, is to look at the body's overall polarity.

All electrical and magnetic phenomena exhibit the property of polarity, that is, organization around two poles of opposing electrical charge. This holds true for phenomena on every scale, from the earth itself, to the battery in your cell phone, to a subatomic particle.

It also holds true, as it turns out, for you.

During the first half of the twentieth century, the Yale researcher Harold Saxton Burr, Ph.D., discovered something fascinating and fundamental about the biofield: like any other electrical phenomena, all organisms exhibit a north/south electrical polarity.

When our physical health or emotional and psychological equilibrium is disrupted, that natural polarity can become disorganized or reversed.

CLEAR BLUE SKIES

Our clinical experiences over the past few decades have shown us that it is possible to live happy and fulfilled lives, to experience the full richness of love, connection, and joy that we are capable of. You can become a better, smarter, calmer, more focused, more powerful, and more deeply joyful you.

Stephanie visited our offices recently to update us on the events of her life. In the several years since we had first met, she has gone on to create a new business that she recently sold for a substantial sum and is now busily engaged in starting yet another business. Things in her life, on every level from business to family to her personal health, are going very well. When we told her we were writing a book about the Four-Step Process and wondered if we might use her story, she immediately agreed.

"People need this," she said. "If you two can find a way to put what you've done for me between the covers of a book, then by all means, use my story!"

She paused for a moment, then said, "You remember the question I asked, that first day I came to see you? I asked you, Why aren't I happy? And you know, I think I found an answer to that question. I think the truth is I already was happy, at least on some level that I couldn't feel. I mean, there was a happy Stefanie in there... somewhere. I just couldn't find my way there. Does that make sense?"

It sure does.

When that asteroid struck 65 million years ago, the sun may have been blotted out, but that doesn't mean it wasn't still there. The dinosaurs just couldn't see it or feel it. The same is true of whatever cataclysmic or seismic tremors have happened in your life to create the clouds of dust and debris that may have obscured your path up to this point. They may have covered up the road to genuine joy, but that doesn't mean that road wasn't still there.

We were designed and created to be happy. It's our nature. It just gets covered up by the fog of distress. And once we're able to clear away that dark cloud of debris left by the asteroids, earthquakes, and volcanoes of our past, we can see the clear blue skies above and feel the bright, warming sun that never really left us.

SUMMARY

Code to Joy

➔ ACTION STEPS

Get more out of this SUCCESS Book Summary by applying what you've learned. Here are a few questions, thoughts and activities to get you started.

1. How would you describe the fog of distress in your life?
2. Think back to your childhood or teenage years and write down those negative events that made a strong impact on your life. While making the list, enlist the help of family and friends who knew you when you were younger.
3. Make a list of three limiting beliefs that hold you back the most in life. Next, counter those with three empowering beliefs.
4. Think back to the dreams you had as a young person. Which ones have you realized and which ones did you never attempt to reach? Write down some of the things that held you back.
5. Begin your own gratitude list. Each day, add at least one thing you are grateful for.
6. Make a list of images of the life you want to be living, the life you describe in your empowering beliefs. Use descriptive words that will evoke the positive feelings related to the images. Keep this list nearby for when you need it most.
7. Pen your own personal code to joy and take a pledge of self-acceptance on a daily basis. To further cement the meaning in your life, write it out, decorate it and keep it visible.

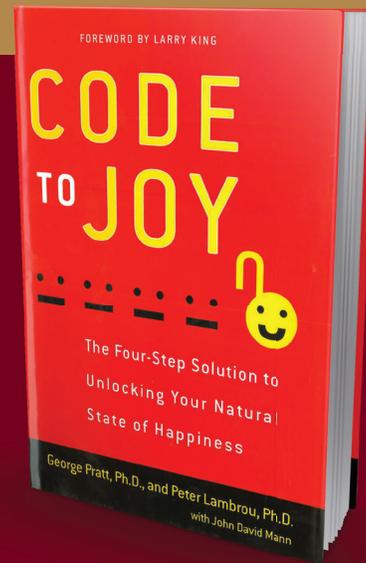
Recommended Reading

If you enjoyed this summary of **Code to Joy**, you may also want to check out:

Resonance by Joyce Hawkes

Breaking the Habit of Being Yourself
by Dr. Joe Dispenza

Life Unlocked by Srinivasan S. Pillay, M.D.



About the Author

George Pratt and Peter Lambrou are licensed clinical psychologists at Scripps Memorial Hospital in La Jolla, Calif. They are co-authors of *Hyper-Performance: The A.I.M. Strategy for Releasing Your Business Potential* and *Instant Emotional Healing: Acupressure for the Emotions*.

Pratt has specialized in hypnotherapy, mind-body techniques, performance enhancement and psychotherapy for more than 30 years. He has served as Chairman of Psychology at Scripps Memorial Hospital for 10 years and has been on staff for more than 20 years.

Lambrou is a licensed clinical psychologist who specializes in anxiety, work stress, weight loss and emotional self-management. He is a Certified Medical Hypnotherapist by the American Psychotherapy and Medical Hypnosis Association, of which he is past president. Lambrou is the author of the best-seller *Self-Hypnosis: The Complete Manual for Health and Self-Change*, which has been translated into 12 languages.

John David Mann is an award-winning author whose titles include *Flash Foresight*, *The Go-Giver*, *It's Not About You* and *Take the Lead*. His writing has earned the Nautilus Book Award and Taiwan's Golden Book Award for Innovation.

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