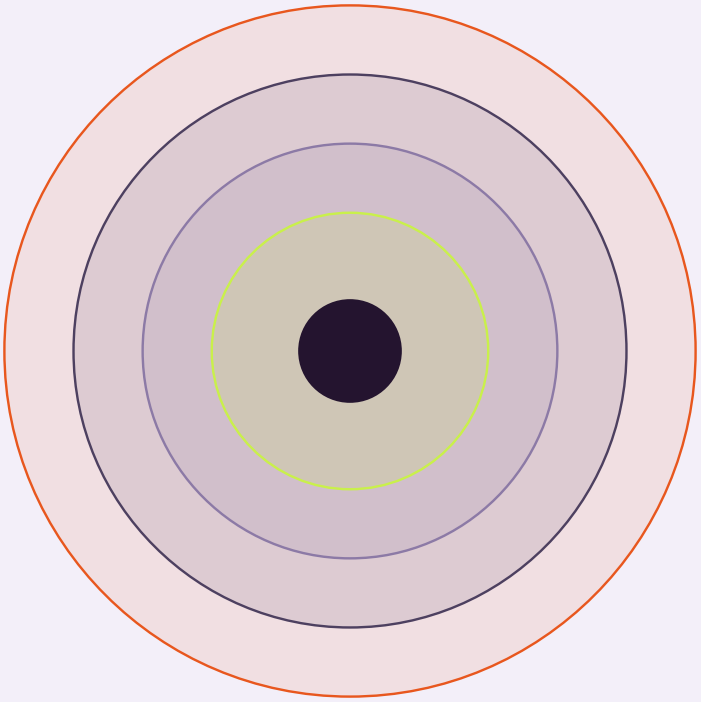


Happiness Deconstructed

A reading of the book by Hussein Kanji & Parveer Pannu (2026)

1. ACTION BOOK

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of Happiness Deconstructed, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

The book in a minute

Two authors take happiness apart the way you would take apart a building: not as a mood to chase but as a structure with foundations, load-bearing walls, and a façade — and argue that most people spend their lives renovating the part that holds nothing up.

Below are the 8 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

The takeaways

1 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Happiness is not a feeling you find. It is a structure you are standing in, and structures can be surveyed.

The book's founding move: treat wellbeing as architecture — something with parts, loads, and failure points — rather than as weather.

2 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Most of what people upgrade is façade. Almost none of what holds the building up is visible from the street.

The distinction the title turns on: decorative elements can be changed cheaply and change nothing.

3 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Foundations are boring, invisible, and non-negotiable. Sleep, health, and two or three close relationships are the concrete.

What sits underneath every credible finding in wellbeing research, and what gets cut first when life gets busy.

4 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A structure fails at its weakest member, not its average. You cannot offset a broken foundation with a beautiful roof.

Why the 'balance' framing misleads — buildings are not scored on averages, and neither are lives.

5 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Deconstructing something means being able to name every part. Most people cannot name three components of their own happiness.

The diagnostic argument: you cannot repair what you have never itemised.

6 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Renovation is exciting. Maintenance is what keeps the building standing for forty years.

The unglamorous half of the metaphor, and the half that decides outcomes.

7 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Two people can hold identical materials and end up in different buildings. Arrangement is the whole discipline.

Why the same salary, the same city, and the same hours produce wildly different lives.

8 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

The hidden architecture is hidden because it was built early, by someone else, before you had a say.

The inherited layer — family, culture, assumption — that a survey has to expose before anything can be rebuilt.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Draw the elevation of your own life
- [ ] Label every member load-bearing or decorative
- [ ] Find the weakest member and write it down plainly
- [ ] Book the foundation repairs before the visible ones
- [ ] Write the inherited assumptions you have never inspected

KEEP UP DAILY

- [ ] Run a five-minute walkthrough every Sunday
- [ ] Protect one foundation daily, without negotiation
- [ ] Ask 'does this hold anything up?' before adding weight

30 days · Nov 11 - Dec 10, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 11 - Dec 10, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

☐ SETUP 1

Draw the elevation of your own life

One page, five levels: health, close relationships, work, money, meaning.

Sketch how tall each one currently is. This is the survey drawing everything else is measured against.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 2

Label every member load-bearing or decorative

Go through your calendar and your spending and mark each recurring item.

Load-bearing means the structure sags without it. Most people find their decorative list is longer and more expensive than they expected.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 3

Find the weakest member and write it down plainly

Not the one that annoys you most — the one that would take everything else with it.

Sleep, a relationship you have stopped tending, a debt. Structures fail at the weakest point.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 4

Book the foundation repairs before the visible ones

Whatever is under the weakest member gets calendar time first: the appointment, the conversation, the earlier bedtime.

Nobody wants to spend a Saturday on foundations, which is exactly why they fail.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 5

Write the inherited assumptions you have never inspected

What did you absorb about what a good life looks like, and from whom?

Three lines. This is the part of the architecture you did not design and have never signed off on.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

Run a five-minute walkthrough every Sunday

Same five levels, quick scores.

Nov 11 - Dec 10, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6 ○
7 ○	8 ○	9 ○	10 ○	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

Protect one foundation daily, without negotiation

Pick one — sleep, movement, or a daily contact with someone close — and treat it as structural rather than optional.

Nov 11 - Dec 10, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

Ask 'does this hold anything up?' before adding weight

New commitment, new subscription, new project.

Nov 11 - Dec 10, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

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December 2026

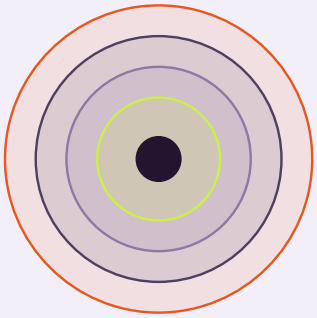
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



Nobody photographs a foundation. Everybody stands on one.

HOURLIFE DISTILLATION