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, and gratitude.
as often as possible.
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!

I love you.

You are beautiful.

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

Touch should always be consensual.
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:
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.
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.
You are really good at that.

You are so smart.

You are beautiful.

Thank you. I appreciate you.
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.
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 hear some good things about me.

I need to feel included.

I need to feel that I matter.

I need to understand and be understood.
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 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…

I never said that. You said that.

Let me explain…

That may be the case, but…

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

It’s not a big deal.
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 made a mistake. I apologize.

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

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

Now is not a good time.

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.

I’ve had it. I am leaving.
I think I understand what you want to do. How can I help?

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

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.