



Tinytask: Your daily dose of happiness

Design by Hans Ruitenberg

Sometimes I read a book and think, this changes everything, now I've learned something that will really make my life better. That is the experience I had when reading 'The How of Happiness' (2007) by American psychologist Sonja Lyubomirsky. First, she gives us the bad news: We often try to find our happiness in life in the wrong things. Things like expensive cars or the latest smartphone. But she has good news as well: We are able to raise our happiness level in a lasting way, you just have to know how. She provides twelve strategies and related happiness-increasing activities, such as, 'showing gratitude' and 'cultivating optimism'. I was inspired. Now I knew exactly what I needed to do in order to become happy! After two months, I took stock; I hadn't undertaken a single happiness activity and my behaviour remained completely unchanged. Mainly, I was frustrated by my failure, so all in all things were worse than when I started. Why had all my initial motivation amounted to nothing? Where had my good intentions run aground?

From insight to action

When you finish a book, you put it on a shelf and that is where it will usually remain. I did the same thing with this 'happiness book'. It literally disappeared into the background of my daily life. Products are different. Products are always around us, everywhere and in everything we do. That gave me an idea. Would it be possible to use a product to turn the insights from the book into some



thing tangible, integrating it into our daily routine? That was the question that inspired designer Hans Ruitenberg. He challenged himself to design 'something' that would entice and help people to do the happiness activities. The result is Tinytask, a range of fun key rings.

Tinytask

Tinytask is a collection of brightly coloured coins. Each coin represents a small challenge (a 'tiny task'). This is how it works: You get an envelope containing six coins. The coins have symbols on them indicating the challenges. You pick a coin to start with. You take it from the envelope and read the short instructions underneath the coin. For example: 'Give a sincere compliment to someone who is not expecting it.' Or, 'Turn on your favourite song and dance to it. Don't be afraid to be a little silly.' Then you attach the coin to your key ring. It is a small but significant act; it signifies you committing to the task. Each time you use your keys, it reminds you. When you have completed the task, you pick another coin. You can keep it last coin or give it to someone else as a present. After you have carried out five of the six assignments, you get another envelope with a new set of coins. Hans created fifty small challenges that together represent the twelve happiness activities by Sonja Lyubomirsky.

I do and I understand

In his research, Hans discovered that people encounter all kinds of obstacles when doing the happiness strategies. As a consequence, those activities require surprisingly more will power and discipline than you might have expected. Hans focused on three obstacles in particular. The first one is that it's hard to translate the general strategies (like 'taking care of your body' and 'committing to your goals') into concrete and realistic actions. Second, there is the fact that it's not easy to include those actions in your daily routine, and third is the challenge to stay motivated. Hans was inspired by the famous Xun



zi's famous quote (818 AD): 'I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.' That is why doing is paramount. Tinytask stimulates you to take action, followed by reflection and insight. The coins translate the abstract strategies into small, manageable challenges and offer a tangible motivation. The wide range of challenges stimulates curiosity and also gives you the freedom to decide the speed and intensity of the activities.

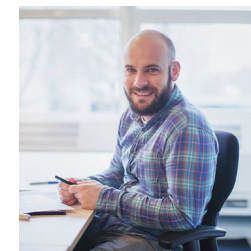
Design as a source of happiness

The project was a challenge for Hans: 'It was an open assignment without any conditions. At first, I relished the freedom. As a designer, you often

have limitations. For instance from a stubborn client, very specific requirements or a demanding target group.' Conditions can be restrictive, but they also give you something to hold on to. For this project, there was practically no limit to what could be designed. Hans found a way by making and testing a wide range of designs step by step. As a result, he involved a lot of people in his design process. That made the project a source of happiness for himself: 'I would unexpectedly get touching responses from people. There was one lady who wrote that after having secretly been in love for months, Tinytask helped her act on it and express her feelings to her colleague. Now they're a happy couple.' A small challenge - with a big impact.



Be a guerrilla gardener: Plant flower seeds somewhere in your neighbourhood. If you pick a spot you frequently pass by, you can see how your flowers are doing.



Hans Ruitenberg developed Tinytask in 2010 as his graduation project at the Delft Institute of Positive Design (DIOPD). The project was started by Pieter Desmet and supervised by Walter Aprile. The Tinytask design was further developed by Steven Fokkinga from Emotion Studio (Rotterdam) in 2017. <http://studiolab.ide.tudelft.nl/diopd/projects/design-projects/tiny-tasks-by-hans-ruitenberg/>

Reference

- Lyubomirsky, S. (2007). *The How of Happiness: A New Approach to Getting the Life You Want*. London: Penguin Books

Colophon

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Reference

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