



The Happiest Mom (Parenting Magazine): 10 Secrets to Enjoying Motherhood

Meagan Francis, Parenting Magazine (Editor)

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You can be a great parent while still enjoying yourself. From the experts at *Parenting* magazine and popular mommy blogger Meagan Francis, *The Happiest Mom* brings the latest happiness research--and the experience of a mother of five--to moms who want to make parenting a little more joyful. With its straightforward humor, honesty, and insight, *The Happiest Mom* is a must-have for both new and veteran moms.

In *The Happiest Mom*, author Meagan Francis shows us that motherhood is not an obstacle to joy. Drawing on recent happiness research, conversations with hundreds of other moms, and her own experience as a mother of five, Francis shares her ten secrets to happy motherhood in this down-to-earth, funny, and accessible book.

Praise for *The Happiest Mom*:

"This book takes the revolutionary approach that you can be a good parent while actually enjoying yourself."--Ada Calhoun, author of *Instinctive Parenting*

"*The Happiest Mom* is packed with the sort of advice you need when you are about to lose it. Every mom needs this book."--Jenna McCarthy, author of *The Parent Trap*

"I found myself underlining passages and laughing out loud in recognition. This thoughtful, hilarious look at motherhood is a terrific resource for anyone who wants to be the happiest mother she can be."--Gretchen Rubin, author of *The New York Times* bestseller *The Happiness Project*

"Reading this book is like chatting with your girlfriend and getting all the support, advice, and laughs you need."--Brett Paesal, author of *Mommies Who Drink*

"*The Happiest Mom* is stuffed with tips that made us feel relieved rather than burdened."--Heather Flett and Whitney Moss, coauthors of *The Rookie Mom's Handbook*

The Happiest Mom (Parenting Magazine): 10 Secrets to Enjoying Motherhood Details

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Beth Bender says

It pains me to give this book only two stars because I love Megan Francis' blog. Frankly, her blog is a lot deeper and thought provoking than this book.

As another reviewer noted, this reads like book version of Parenting Magazine. Like that reviewer I hate Parenting Magazine.

Instead of a book that reflects the Meagan Francis from her blog, this was Megan Francis writing what Parenting Magazine told her too. Which she did really well, and hey, a woman's got to make a living. But I was still disappointed.

Anne says

I hate martyrs. So, a book attempting to convince mothers (and all parents) to stop being martyrs is right up my alley. Francis's thesis is that motherhood has swung from something we were all supposed to pretend was the most fulfilling thing in the world (resulting in The Yellow Wallpaper) to something now that everyone complains on blogs about as contributing to their need to imbibe multiple glasses of wine each evening. Francis believes there has to be something in the middle - a place where we love and cherish our children, but where we also have time to go to the movies with our friends, read, and do everything we did in our pre-children lives. She encourages mothers to put their own needs first, and to cut back on overscheduling their children - because often less really is more. I have no idea what Francis's background is - other than the fact that she is a parent - so she doesn't offer any kind of deep psychological analysis or purport to be an expert on anything - but she does have some great ideas. Mostly, this book serves as a good reminder that even though children change our lives, they don't necessarily have to ruin them - and those who choose to see the world that way have no one to blame but themselves.

Shannon Cate says

This is not your typical parenting advice book. It is sensible and realistic. Frankly, its secrets to happiness could work well in any context, but if you're a mom--even one who was pretty good at being happy before kids--those tricks and attitudes can get lost in the sleep-deprived shuffle.

It isn't a book you'll read through once and shelve. It's a book you'll want to keep handy to look up little reminders from time to time when you need help talking yourself down from some ledge or another.

Marisa says

I give up. I couldn't get through this. Meagan Francis seems like a very likeable, sane, balanced person and

parent, and I appreciate what she has to say. The execution, however, was cloying. If I had stumbled across this in a magazine I would have read it, found it somewhat interesting, and moved on without giving it another thought. The most useful aspect of the book is her 10 secrets to happier parenting, but the beginning segment that lists all 10 feels sufficient - there's really very little need to devote an entire chapter to each of them without saying something that hasn't been said 1000 times before.

I have 2 children with special needs, so maybe the problem is that I'm not her target audience. But when she tells parents that they can still be great parents even if their children sometimes wear wrinkled clothing or eat sugary cereal for breakfast, it makes me think she's talking to parents who have not (yet) dealt with the kinds of situations that make those questions fly out the window without a moment's notice.

Kristen says

Meh. Read like a glorified magazine article, so if that's your thing then you'd probably enjoy. I was hoping for something solid with actual research and concrete examples, so was disappointed. Granted I stopped about half the way thru, so I can't comment on the last half.

Alisa says

Overall, this was a fun easy read. I love Parenting magazine, so found a book recommended by that magazine. I wouldn't say there was anything "new and amazing" in this book, but overall, it had some great reminders to me, especially that I am my kids' best mom, and to also make sure you have/are doing fun things as a mom. It's a "busy" book artistically, but also has some great send-ins from other moms on different topics.

MadziaB says

It just what I needed after few hectic days with little ones, one teething and the other negotiator of the world... The book is full of simple but very helpful advise. Ten chapters specify ten ways in which you can become more effective or successful at the "being a mom" gig :) Meagan Francis, a mommy blogger, and the author of the book recommends we: take the easy way out at times, aim low and go slow, trust our gut, keep it real, find our tribe, go with the flow, make our bed on daily basis, have plan, look for # 1, and love your love life. Each chapter is full of funny stories, quiz so you can find your position on given subject and tricks ideas how to become better, hence happier. Thank you Mrs. Francis :)

Christine says

A fun and practical guide to motherhood. This book doesn't judge or measure mothers against impossible standards, it just offers tips and ideas to put the happy into motherhood. The quizzes are a fun and engaging way to get mothers thinking about their priorities and approach to parenting. What I appreciate most is the tone-Meagan is engaging, kind, whimsical and honest. She calls it like it is and has a lot of fun doing it.

Sarah says

I like Meagan Francis in general, so I was happy to read this little book and take whatever insight she had to heart.

While most of the information is pretty much common sense (although when you are a new mom in any stage of parenting I know that's sometimes hard to come by) it was nice to read that I wasn't alone in my "mommy woes".

The book is easy to read, made me smile when I recognized myself in some passages, and written in a way that feels like you're chatting with a friend.

Amanda says

I read this book in about 2 hours. It was a cute little "mommy peptalk" book. Nothing totally mind blowing. The diamond in the information for me was the recommendation to think about tasks and routines that you are doing regularly and identify which ones are really drains -- what you absolutely hate doing, what takes more time than it seems like it should, etc. -- and rethink how and why you are doing those things. If you have a "hobby" or are volunteering to do something that you don't enjoy or makes you feel stressed more than you want, then rethink that. If there is a household chore that isn't working well into the house life, think outside the box to tweak it to fit. As someone who does a lot of things because I should or always have, it is something I might spend some time thinking about! (Rest assured, the author said this in a much better way than I just did.)

Sheri says

Self-help-ish books aren't really my thing, but every now and then I get down in the dumps just enough to crack one open. After a few years of feeling incredibly overwhelmed and discouraged with the stay-at-home mother life, I decided to give this book a shot. It took me several months to pick my way through it. While relatable and witty in its own way, it wasn't incredibly captivating. But I did find a few little gems of advice that were worth my time. I found the chapters *Make Your Bed* and *Love Your Love Life* the most helpful. The advice given throughout this book isn't exactly ground-breaking, but it all served as very good reminders. I'm glad I read it, and will probably keep it handy to read bits and pieces when I need the encouragement.

Alissa says

This is a cute little book filled with practical advice. Nothing earth shattering, just a reminder that you should take time for yourself, and people don't need to be able to eat off your kitchen floors.

The addition of real life mom quotes and facts from Parenting magazine provide a nice balance to Meagan

Francis's writing.

It would be a nice baby shower gift for a new mom.

For more in-depth advice I would recommend the 7 Stages of Motherhood, or Meg Meeker's 10 Habits of Happy Mothers.

Three words that describe this book: uplifting, practical, moms

Amy Kannel says

Meagan Francis has been blogging at The Happiest Mom since 2009, but I only discovered her a few months ago. I'm not quick to add to my already-overflowing feed reader, but the first post I read intrigued me enough to keep poking around. A quick trip through her "Favorite Posts" had me hitting not only "subscribe" but "print."

Her writing is honest, relatable, funny, give-it-to-you straight. And the blog fills a needed niche: it's not the "motherhood is so hard, let's all commiserate together" mommy blog, and not the "motherhood is the greatest delight of my life, let's go do a 47-step craft with our angelic, gifted children in our meticulously organized house" mommy blog. Instead it's this delightfully challenging yet empowering middle ground: a mommy blog that says, "yes, it's hard sometimes, but you have choices about how you feel and what you do, so do what it takes to be a happy mom!"

So when I saw that Meagan Francis had a book coming out, I wanted to read it. Obviously, I was hoping for a book-length version of her blog.

Instead, I got a book-length version of Parenting magazine.

I don't like Parenting magazine.

First the positives. The book is gorgeous. Colorful, well-designed—just really nice to look at. When I requested a copy, I suggested that I'd be happy with an e-version for my Kindle, but the author said I'd want a print copy because of how beautiful it is, and she was right. If you have any kind of appreciation for print design, you'll be impressed with The Happiest Mom: 10 Secrets to Enjoying Motherhood. And there were a couple of places I marked that Francis offered some helpful insights, like "questions to ask yourself to regain perspective," that sort of thing.

But I'm afraid it speaks volumes when the first and most positive thing I want to say about a book refers to its design. I don't read books for design; I read them for content. And the content here is disappointing. The book is stuffed full of trendy pop-culture references that make it feel dated, rather than full of timeless wisdom. It reads like a collection of magazine articles—complete with obnoxious quizzes ("Are you 'Tidy Tracy' or 'Hot Mess Heather'?" I mean, seriously?) and largely pointless sidebar quotes from "real-life moms!" It's trying too hard to be your best pal, all hip and funny and full of common sense advice. In other words, it seems like something Parenting dreamed up and contracted Francis to write in a magazine-article-writer voice. Which she's really good at...but it just isn't what I was expecting or hoping for. Frankly, all I could think as I read was, "Meagan Francis is better than this."

So...yeah. I really, really hate to give a negative review of a book when the author so graciously sent me a complimentary copy. But there you have it.

Of course, to go a little deeper, I think part of the problem is that a book like this isn't going to be ultimately satisfying because the realest secrets to happiness aren't going to be found in ten steps for organizing life and taking care of myself. If I am seeking fulfillment and happiness in motherhood, in "finding my tribe" (tip #5), in "having a plan" (#8) or in my marriage (#10), I'm going to come up short every time. These are great things: marriage and motherhood are beautiful gifts from the Lord; planning and seeking like-minded friends are wise and helpful advice. But friends and a plan cannot solve all my problems, and a husband and children cannot satisfy my soul.

I don't know what Meagan Francis believes about God and the big questions of life. But with the first awesome blog posts I read at The Happiest Mom, although they did not refer to spiritual matters at all, I could easily apply a gospel perspective as I read, and they took on even deeper meaning. The book version, however, has some advice that is completely contradictory to the gospel (most obviously chapter 9, "Look Out for Number One," in which readers are told, "Being selfish is a very, very good thing"). In other words, this is definitely not the place to go for advice on how to be the happiest mom in a biblical sense. (To be clear: I do think it's completely fine, even important, to continue pursuing your pre-mom interests and hang on to some of the things that make you "you"--but I wouldn't take that to the conclusion of "it's necessary to put yourself first; you are number one." At the very least, I wouldn't word it that way.)

All that to say: If you want to read winsome, funny, practical advice about enjoying motherhood, save your money and subscribe to TheHappiestMom.com. And if you want a more ultimate-truth kind of answer to finding joy in motherhood and life, meditate on Psalm 16 and immerse yourself in the gospel.

Laurie DelaCruz says

this is an easy read, and fairly simplistic. I love the author's personal story, and how that informs her approach to motherhood and personal fulfillment. It's not written from a Christian perspective, of course, so there are things I would tweak. But it is always helpful to evaluate and reevaluate where we are at emotionally in the journey of motherhood, and I absolutely agree that if mama ain't happy, ain't nobody happy.

Nicole says

Barnes & Noble had a lovely table of "motherhood" books displayed just in time for Mother's Day - this one caught my eye. As far as the actual layout of the book, it's very reader/busy-mom friendly - short little chapters and sidebars. But this also made it read more like a magazine article or blog than an in-depth helpful book. There was nothing new here that most moms don't already know and accept (but may not actually put into practice all of the time). So, while a nice little reminder of things we should do as moms to be happier, there were no real "secrets" here.

Recommended as something to browse through, but no need to buy. You already know this stuff.
