# Phenomenal Performance



*This handout focuses on a simple premise: You can improve your performances in virtually anything by increasing your mental toughness and happiness.*

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Phenomenal performance occurs when you carry out an action at a level far higher than normally anticipated. It is superior behaviour that exceeds expectations. Classic examples include Bob Beamon's smashing of the long jump world record by 55cm (21¾ inches), Michael Jackson's first public use of the moon walk while singing Billie Jean, and Whitney Houston's highly praised singing of the national anthem at the 1991 Super Bowl. They are events that few witnesses will forget and most will admire even decades later.

Such performances are not necessarily pleasant to conduct, such as Steve Jobs terminating 70% of Macintosh projects and laying off over 3,000 staff, so that Apple could focus on projects deemed to be more likely to produce a commercial success. Nevertheless, such experiences make life worthwhile, enhancing, and profound. And they can potentially be experienced by anyone. Artists, musicians, athletes, and workers (and hopefully you) have all reported such phenomenal moments.

These performances all have something in common. If you asked Bob, Michael, Whitney, or Steve, they probably all would have explained that they had a strong sense of self, fascination with the task, clear focus, and their behaviour felt spontaneous. This handout shows you how to duplicate these inner thoughts and feelings to produce phenomenal performances.


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When individuals perform phenomenally, they usually report most of the following characteristics: complete absorption, the exclusion of irrelevant thoughts and emotions, enjoyment, and an effortless harmony of mind and body working together. This is a well established phenomena, referenced by several prominent authors. For instance, Barbara de Angelis suggests, "Only when your consciousness is totally focused on the moment you are in can you receive whatever gift, lesson, or delight that moment has to offer." Likewise, Giovanni Monetaís has written about a "state of profound task-absorption, cognitive efficiency, and intrinsic enjoyment that makes a person feel one with the activity in which she/he is involved." This optimal state of mind and body usually is associated with a perception that you have a balance between the challenges you think you face and the skills you think you have; a sense of automaticity and spontaneity; clearly defined goals; the absence of negative, unclear, or ambiguous feedback; total concentration; a sense of being in control without trying to be in control; a loss of self-awareness; and a loss of time awareness.

The more mentally tough and happy you are, the more likely you are going to produce such phenomenal performances.




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# Mental toughness

Mentally tough individuals have developed a psychological edge that enables them to cope better with the various demands they face. Thus, they tend to be assertive, committed to their goals, competitive, confident in their ability to deal with situations, consistent in their focus, courageous, less bothered about pain, and responsible. Therefore they gain by being more consistent performers and better able to remain confident, determined, focused, and in control.

An important characteristic of mental toughness, which is seen in all sectors of society (employment, families, music, relationships, sport), is being relaxed and friendly. These people handle life well, enjoy life more, and so smile more. As Peter Clough notes: "Mentally tough individuals tend to be sociable and outgoing; as they are able to remain calm and relaxed, they are competitive in many situations and have lower anxiety levels than others. With a high sense of self-belief and an unshakeable faith that they can control their own destiny, these individuals can remain relatively unaffected by competition or adversity."



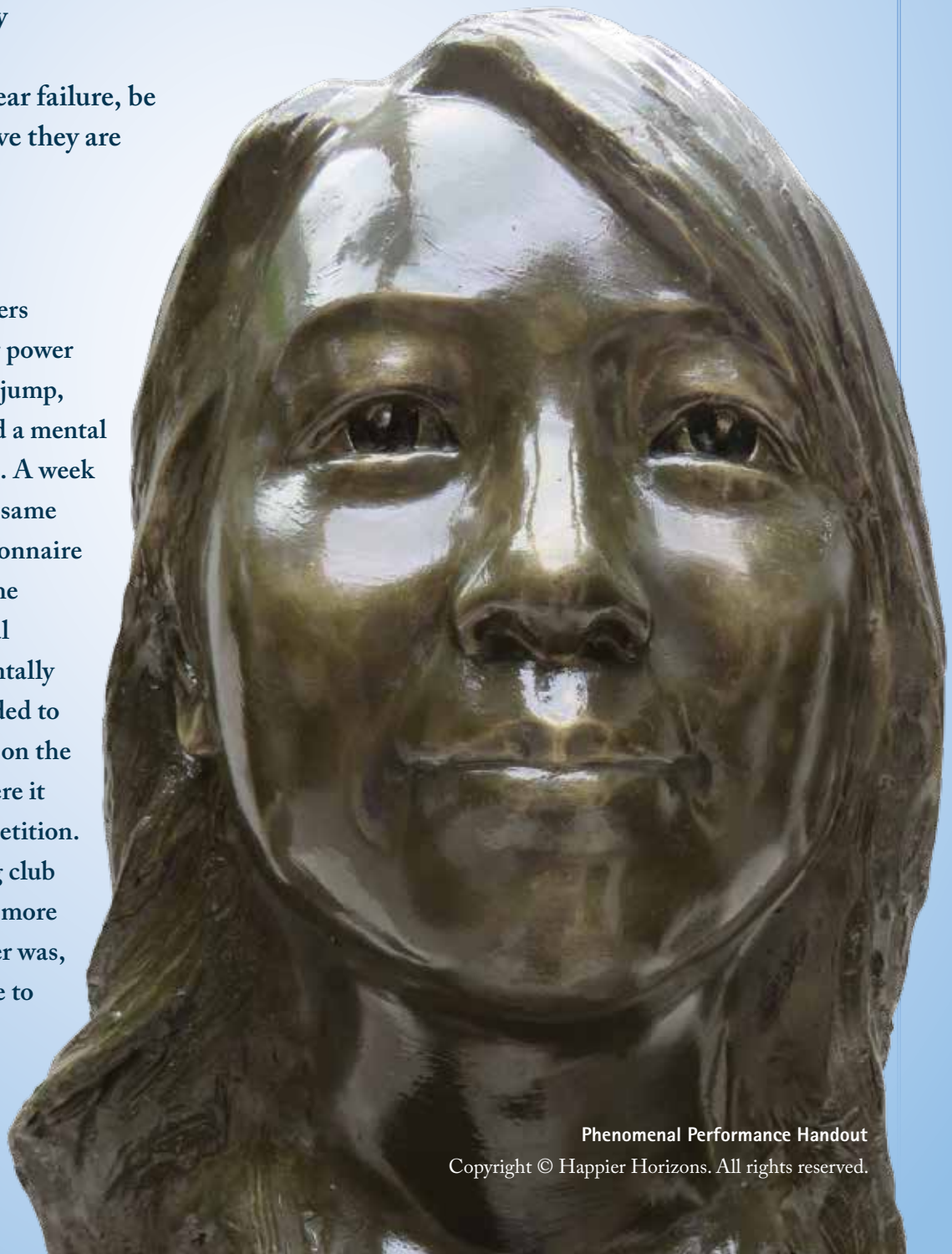
**Mentally tough people (compared with mentally sensitive people) are more likely to be:**

- calm and relaxed
- completely self-confident
- focused and concentrated
- highly motivated and self-directed
- in control of their behaviour
- in control of their emotions
- positive, yet realistic
- resolute and determined to succeed
- using appropriate mental energy levels


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**Mentally tough individuals (compared with mentally sensitive individuals) gain by:**

- having better sleep quality, longer sleep duration, and shorter sleep onset latency
- having less daytime sleepiness, and objectively better sleep, as recorded via sleep-EEG
- being more likely to exercise
- having less counterproductive classroom behaviour
- adjusting to school and university better
- having better attendance records
- obtaining higher academic grades
- enduring physical challenges longer (such as holding a weight longer)
- having better adjustment to military training (& less likely to quit)
- making more money
- being happier
- being less likely to fear failure, be depressed, or perceive they are "stressed"



Male black-belt kickboxers completed two muscular power tests (countermovement jump, medicine ball throw) and a mental toughness questionnaire. A week later they completed the same mental toughness questionnaire twenty minutes before the semi-final of the national championships. The mentally toughest kickboxers tended to perform better, not only on the two power tests, but where it really mattered, in competition. A study of 420 slimming club members found that the more mentally tough a member was, the more likely they were to both eat healthy and not let their emotions affect their eating.


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**Mental toughness helps us in three ways. First, mentally tough people thrive in demanding situations. So they don't experience as much anxiety as mentally sensitive individuals do. Second, they learn from their failures and quickly move on. Sensitive folk, however, are more likely to dwell in misery over a failure for far longer. Third, because mentally tough people have more success and experience more positive emotions, their thought processes are boosted with direct increases to their confidence and self-esteem.**


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*The message is not:*

*Become a robot!*

*Instead, the message is:*

*Become a*

*mentally tough human!*





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# Mental toughness can be increased by:

*SONS + GOAT + GP-CA – POT*

## SONS

*Remove Self-destructive thoughts*

*Pursue your Own moral compass*

*Remove Negative traits gained from parents*

*Remove Self-soothing behavior*



## GOAT

*Growth mind-set*

*Observe*

*Act*

*Trust yourself*

## GP-CA (California Doctor)

*Guidance*

*Push*

*Celebrate*

*Analyse*

## Minimise POT

*Perfectionism*

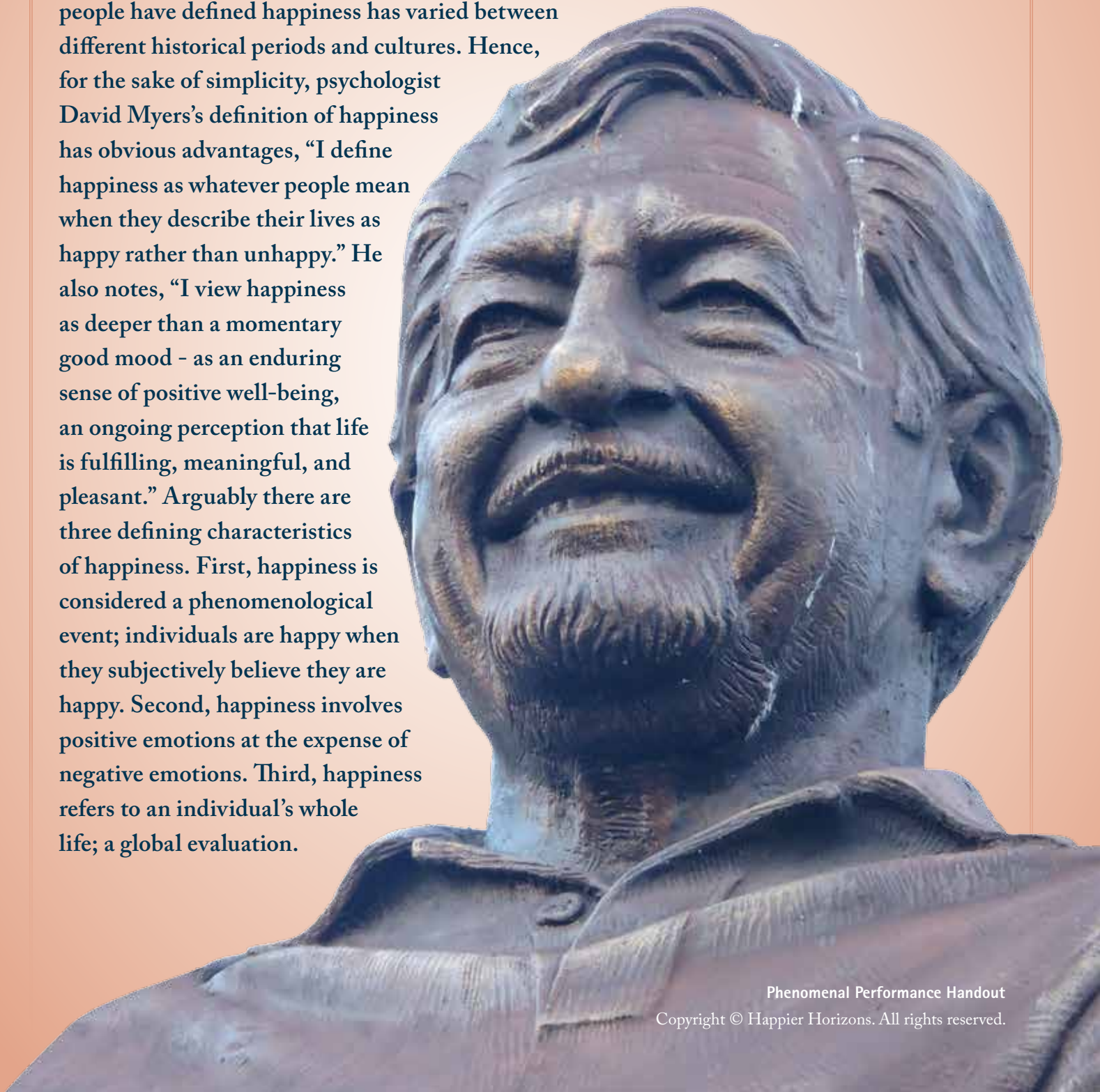
*Over-Thinking*

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# Happiness

The general public tend to answer social survey research about feelings and happiness easily. But ask them to define happiness and many struggle. For some, if they feel happy, but are totally unaware of their thoughts, they claim they are happy. Other people are able to say to themselves, "Overall, I believe I am happy", while experiencing little emotion. Not only is the definition of happiness complicated by questions of whether it involves emotion or thinking, but how people have defined happiness has varied between different historical periods and cultures. Hence, for the sake of simplicity, psychologist David Myers's definition of happiness has obvious advantages, "I define happiness as whatever people mean when they describe their lives as happy rather than unhappy." He also notes, "I view happiness as deeper than a momentary good mood - as an enduring sense of positive well-being, an ongoing perception that life is fulfilling, meaningful, and pleasant." Arguably there are three defining characteristics of happiness. First, happiness is considered a phenomenological event; individuals are happy when they subjectively believe they are happy. Second, happiness involves positive emotions at the expense of negative emotions. Third, happiness refers to an individual's whole life; a global evaluation.




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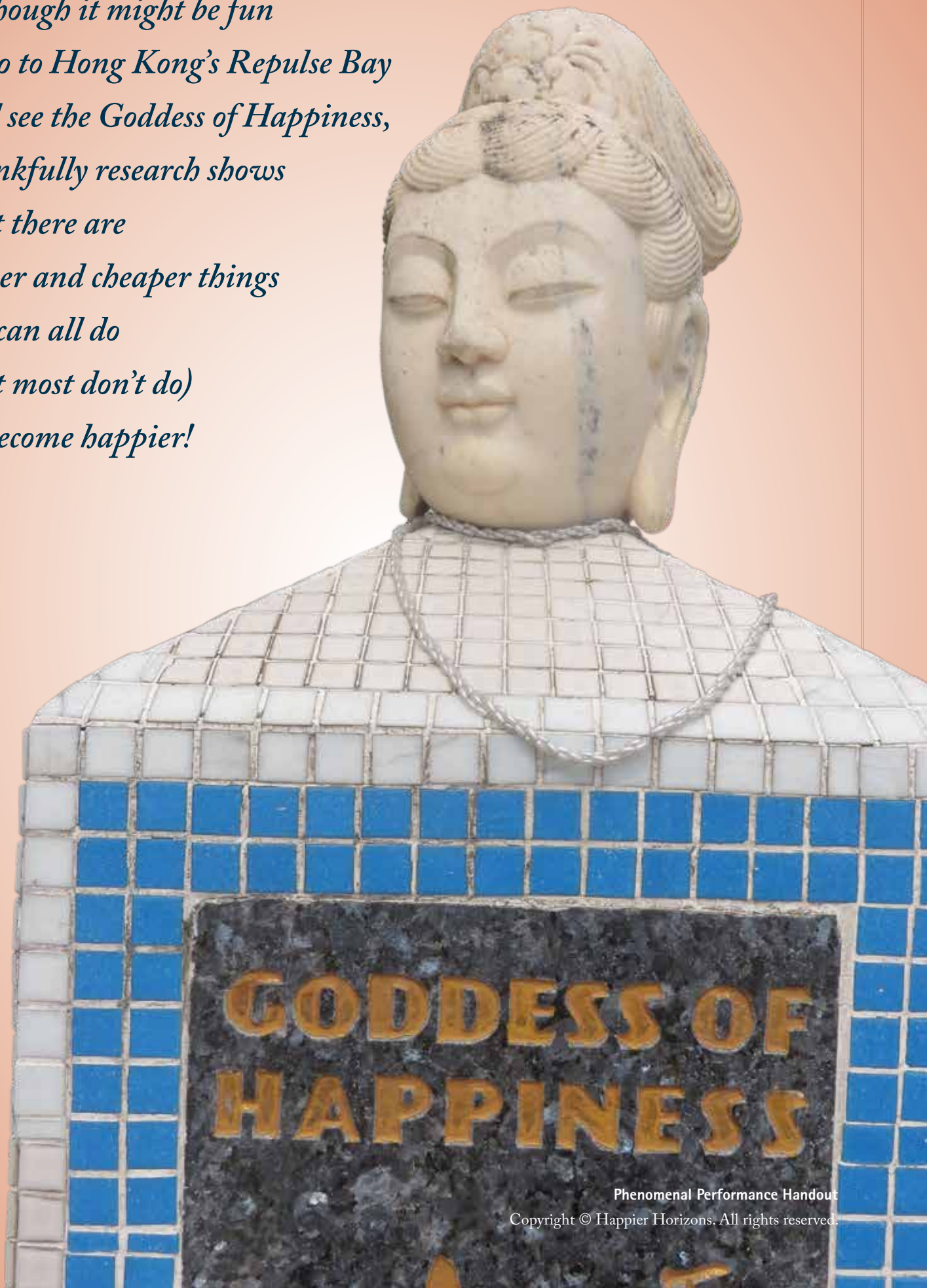
**Happy people compared with unhappy people view life through a more positive and helpful lens. They are also less focused on themselves. Hence, itís not surprising that research indicates that happy people (compared with unhappy people) gain by:**

- being more productive at work
- being more creative at work
- having more favorable supervisor evaluations
- having more energy
- have higher batting averages as cricketers
- participating in more activities
- being more likely to graduate from college
- perceiving less pain
- perceiving less "stress"
- exaggerating criticism less
- having better health
- living longer




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*Although it might be fun*
*to go to Hong Kong's Repulse Bay*
*and see the Goddess of Happiness,*
*thankfully research shows*
*that there are*
*easier and cheaper things*
*we can all do*
*(but most don't do)*
*to become happier!*





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# Happiness can be increased by:

*NESTS + Habits + NOISE + Thriving Habit + 5 Ss*

## NESTS

*Nutrition*
*Exercise*
*Sleep*
*Thoughts*
*Social support*

## Habits

*Use proactive habits (e.g., mental imagery, goal-setting, volunteering)*

## NOISE

*Neuroticism*
*Optimism*
*Internal locus of control*
*Self-esteem*
*Extroversion*

## Thriving Habit

*(5-minute NOISE/relaxation/ thought-changing routine)*

## Five Ss

*Sort*
*Set*
*Supervise*
*Steadily*
*Savour*



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## To have good NESTS:

**N***utrition*
*(Eat with moderation, variety, and balance)*

**E***xercise*
*(Make consistently healthy moving your way of life)*

**S***leep*
*(Go to bed at regular times and have 8+ hours of sleep every night)*

**T***houghts*
*(Maintain positive emotions by using functional thinking)*

**S***ocial support*
*(Nurture a network of positive friends, family, colleagues, and neighbours)*

## To ensure positive NOISE:

**N***euroticism (decrease)*
*(Be relaxed, in control of your emotions, and act rationally)*

**O***ptimism*
*(Believe your life and the world will get better)*

**I***nternal locus of control*
*(Have a sense of control and take responsibility for your life)*

**S***elf-esteem*
*(Be optimistic, active, achieve/notice success)*

**E***xtroversion*
*(Be sociable and control impulsivity)*

## To utilise the Five Ss:

**S***ort the prioritization of your values*

**S***et goals based on these prioritized values*

**S***upervise your levels of fear*

**S***teadily work towards achieving your goals*

**S***avour your successes*




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# Combine mental toughness and happiness for phenomenal performances



*Although there are many ways to perform well, to perform phenomenally you should develop high levels of both mental toughness and happiness. Happiness is easy to spot in others.*



*Detecting mental toughness is a little harder. However, observing the combination of high levels of both mental toughness and happiness is far harder, as the percentage of people who have such high levels is very small. That's one reason why these two qualities combined are so effective.*



*Nevertheless, once in a while, as seen in the four pictures on this page, you will come across people who have a strong, self-assured character with a relaxed, cheerful disposition*





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# Research indicates that you can increase your mental toughness and happiness

## NESTS + Habits + NOISE + Thriving Habit + 5 Ss + SONS + GOAT + GP-CA - POT

That formula is a simple way to remember very effective ways to increase performance.

*Please take note of the minus sign ahead of POT!*

*I am not suggesting that this formula is the only way to increase performance. Rather it's a handy method to remember some very effective ways. If you implement one of them, then your life is likely to get better; implement many and your life will improve in leaps and bounds.*



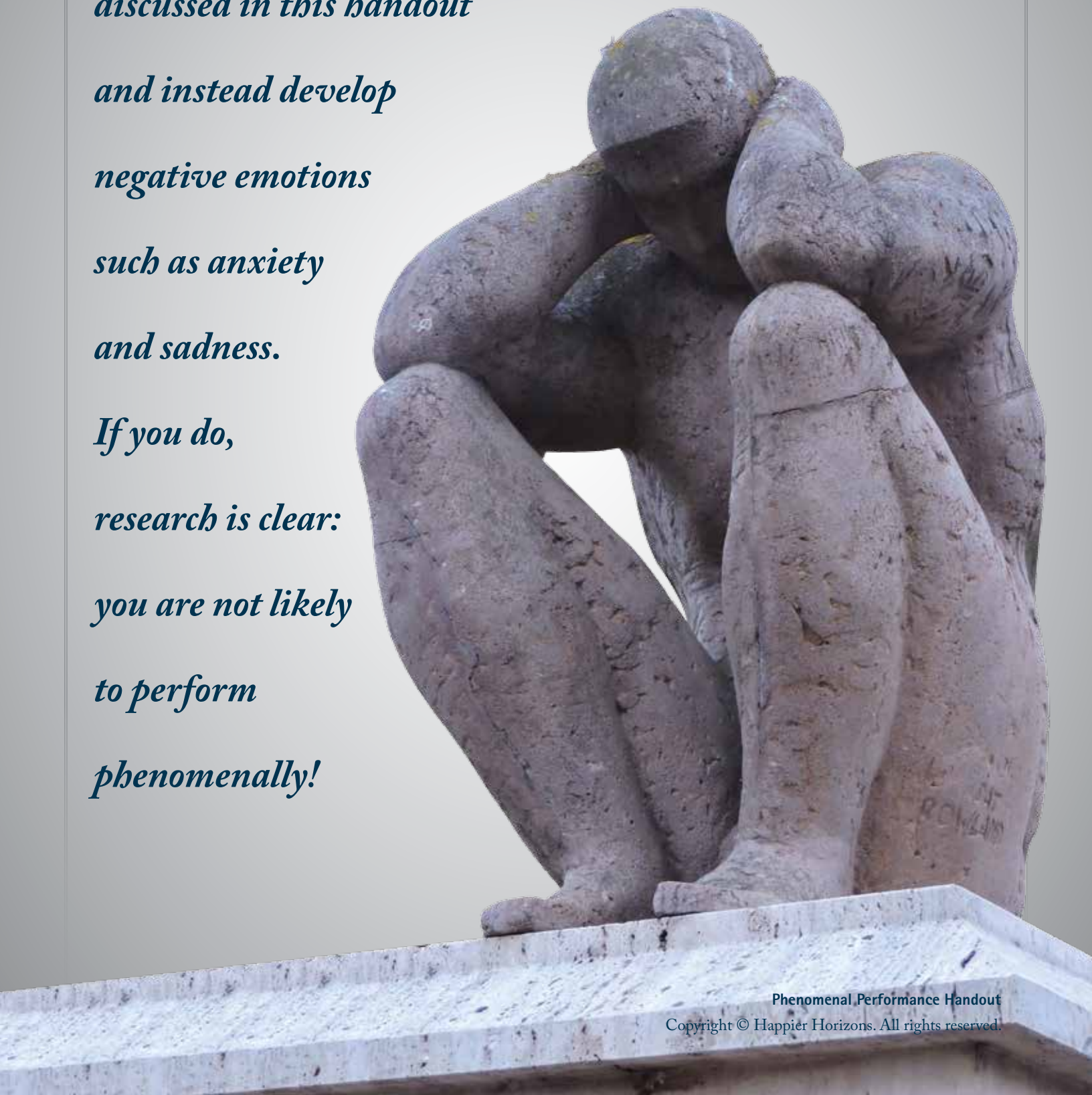

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*If you are both mentally tough and happy,*
*when you get a great opportunity,*
*you can confidently grab it with both hands*
*and perform phenomenally*

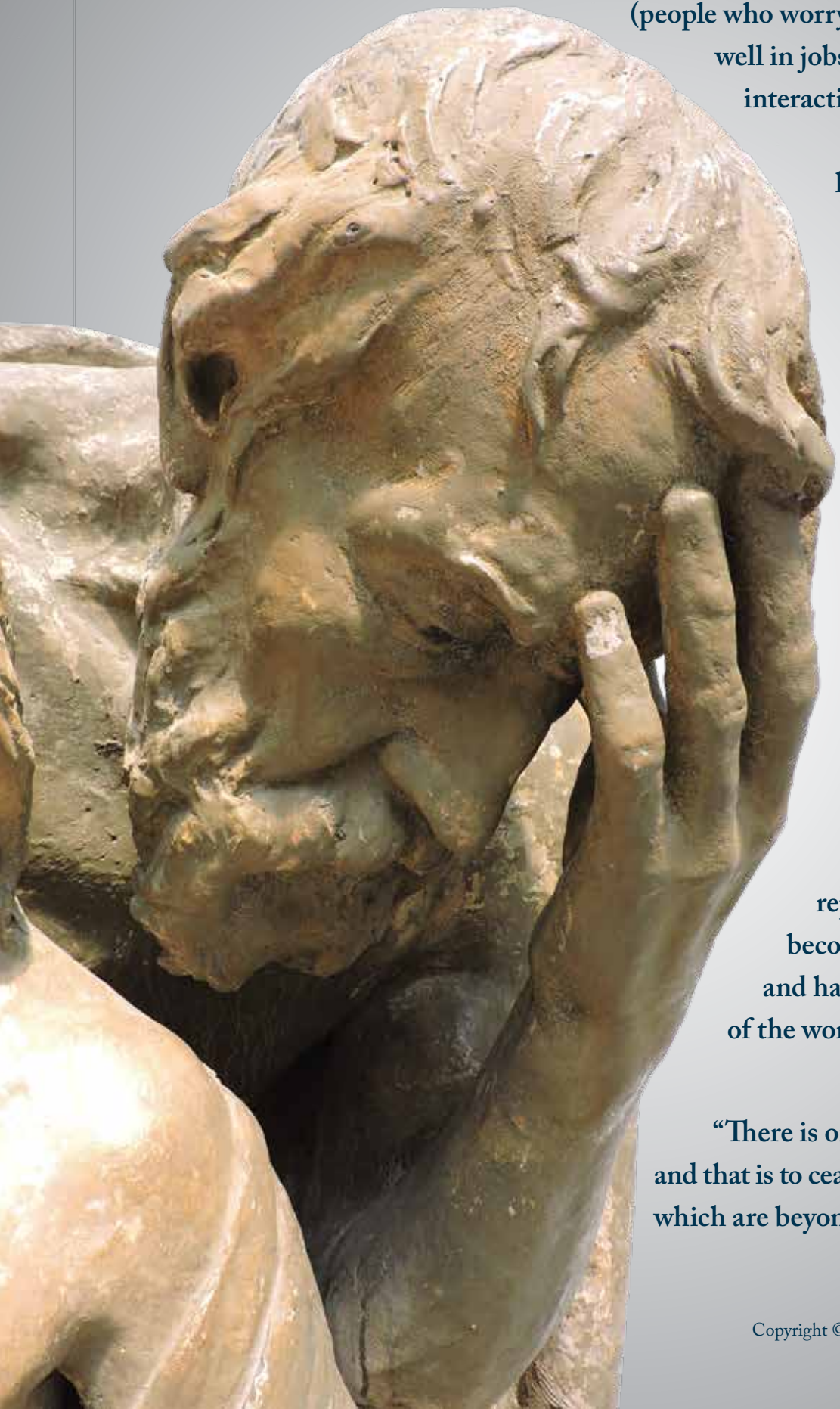



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*You could ignore the research discussed in this handout and instead develop negative emotions such as anxiety and sadness. If you do, research is clear: you are not likely to perform phenomenally!*




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Research focussing on the effects of negative thinking shows that consistent worry diminishes performance and reduces emotional stability. For instance, neurotics (people who worry a lot) do not perform as well in jobs involving interpersonal interactions, are more frequently absent from work, and have less job satisfaction. Neurotics also have worse health. They are more likely to have gastro-intestinal disorders, migraines, difficulties waking up in the morning, daytime sleepiness, sexual problems, and die younger. Studies indicate that mentally sensitive athletes are more likely to perceive competitive situations as threatening, whereas mentally tough athletes report less anxiety. Hence, become more mentally tough and happy! Likewise, take note of the words of Greek philosopher Epictetus:

"There is only one way to happiness and that is to cease worrying about things which are beyond the power of our will."


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# *What goes on inside your brain really matters when performing*



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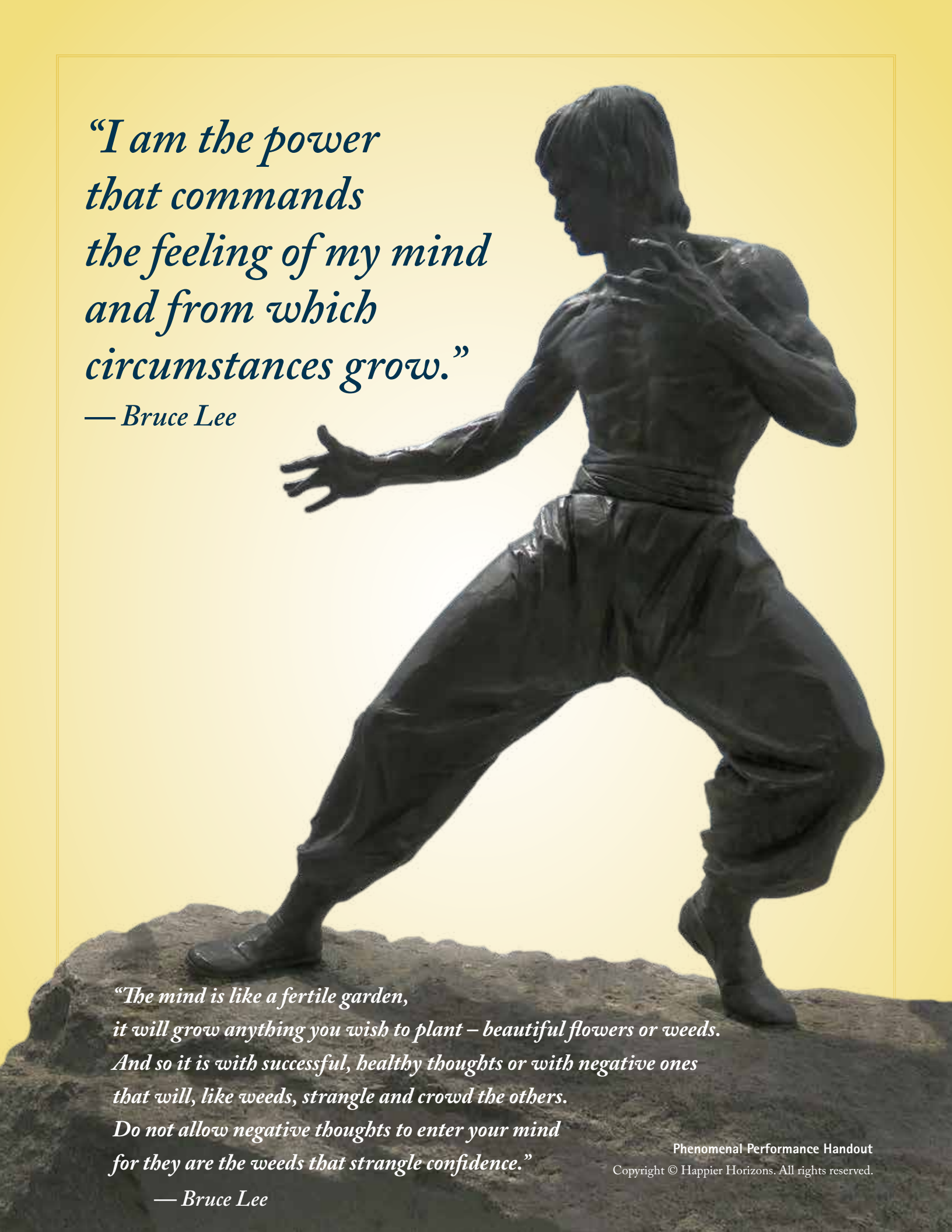
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*Get your brain working well with mental toughness and happiness and you just might create a phenomenal performance*



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# *So what are you going to grow in your head?*



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