

'OMG! This book is SO me! The tips and stories shared by Ed, Mark and Nicky will help you live a life filled with more fun, joy and enthusiasm!'

ALISON HAMMOND, TV Presenter

BE MRE KID

**HOW TO ESCAPE THE
GROWN UP TRAP AND
LIVE LIFE TO THE FULL!**

ED JAMES • MARK TAYLOR • NICKY TAYLOR

Table of Contents

[COVER](#)

[TITLEPAGE](#)

[COPYRIGHT](#)

[DEDICATION](#)

[ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS](#)

[INTRODUCTION](#)

[Part I: STUCK AND SETTLING FOR](#)

[CHAPTER 1: WHY ARE YOU CHOOSING TO BE
UNHAPPY?](#)

[BE MORE KID](#)

[NOTE](#)

[CHAPTER 2: OVERTHINKING](#)

[THE PHYSIOLOGY OF OVERTHINKING](#)

[IT MIGHT NEVER HAPPEN](#)

[LETTING YOUR PAST RULE YOUR FUTURE](#)

[ESCAPISM VS. REPROGRAMMING](#)

[FEELINGS OF DIS-EASE](#)

[BE MORE KID](#)

[CHAPTER 3: PROCRASTINATING](#)

[WHY DO PEOPLE PROCRASTINATE?](#)

[THE BUSYNESS TRAP](#)

[SEEING THE BIG PICTURE](#)

[MOTIVATION: THE FLIP SIDE TO
PROCRASTINATION](#)

[LIFE IS A JOURNEY, NOT A DESTINATION](#)

[EXCUSES FOR PROCRASTINATION](#)

THERE IS NO MAGIC WAND

BE MORE KID

CHAPTER 4: PASSENGER OR DRIVER?

LIVING IN THE GREY ZONE

WHY WE STAY TRAPPED IN THE GREY ZONE

WHY DO WE BECOME A PASSENGER?

HOW TO TELL IF YOU'RE A PASSENGER IN
YOUR LIFE

HOW TO BECOME A DRIVER

DON'T LET YOUR LIFE BE DEFINED

ESCAPING THE GREY ZONE IS DIFFERENT
FOR EVERYONE

BE MORE KID

Part II: REDISCOVERING YOU

CHAPTER 5: IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT, DON'T DO IT

THE POWER OF SAYING NO

BEING AUTHENTIC

RETAINING YOUR STRUCTURE

ESCAPING THE TRAP OF UNFULFILLMENT

BE MORE KID

CHAPTER 6: YOU THINK TOO MUCH

YOUR MODEL OF THE WORLD

HOW YOUR MODEL OF THE WORLD
INFLUENCES SELF-TALK

BE MORE KID

CHAPTER 7: BEING REAL

WHAT DOES BEING REAL LOOK LIKE?

PLAYING A PART

THINGS WILL CHANGE

HOW TO RECONNECT WITH YOURSELF

NO FAILURES, ONLY FEEDBACK

BE MORE KID

NOTE

CHAPTER 8: OKAY WITH NOT BEING OKAY

WHEN DOES IT BECOME A WAY OF LIFE?

WHY ARE PEOPLE NOT OKAY?

ACKNOWLEDGE HOW YOU'RE FEELING

NEGATIVE EMOTIONS AREN'T BAD

BE TRUE TO WHO YOU ARE

FINDING THE RIGHT MINDSET

BE MORE KID

Part III: UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

CHAPTER 9: CONTENTMENT VS. HAPPINESS

ARE YOU A HAPPINESS JUNKIE?

HOW TO BREAK YOUR HAPPINESS

ADDICTION

DEVELOPING RESILIENCE

THERE IS NO 'HAPPY EVER AFTER'

THE HAPPINESS TRAP

FINDING THE RIGHT PRIORITIES

HOW TO BREAK FREE FROM THE

HAPPINESS TRAP

HOW TO START THE CONVERSATION WITH

YOURSELF

BE MORE KID

CHAPTER 10: BEYOND POSITIVE THINKING

OPTIMIST OR PESSIMIST?

THE TROUBLE WITH POSITIVE
AFFIRMATIONS

CHALLENGING YOUR LIMITING BELIEFS

IMAGINARY CHAINS IN AN INVISIBLE
PRISON

EVOLVE YOUR THINKING

HOW TO GO BEYOND POSITIVE THINKING

BE MORE KID

NOTE

CHAPTER 11: THE POWER OF IMAGINATION

DO YOU KNOW WHAT IS REALITY?

TRAINING YOUR MIND

YOU HAVE A CHOICE

SEE IT THE WAY THAT YOU WANT IT

COPING WITH A FEAR OF THE FUTURE

BE MORE KID

Part IV: PUTTING YOURSELF FIRST

CHAPTER 12: HOW TO ADAPT TO ANY
SITUATION

WHAT TRAITS DO YOU NEED TO BE
ADAPTABLE?

WHY DOES IT CHANGE?

FLEXIBILITY LEADS TO OPPORTUNITIES

WHAT STOPS PEOPLE BEING ADAPTABLE?

GIVE YOURSELF A BREAK

BE MORE KID

CHAPTER 13: THE ART OF MANIPULATION

DEFINING MANIPULATION

WHY DO YOU ALWAYS SAY YES?

HOW TO TELL IF YOU SAY YES TOO MUCH
SAY YES FOR THE RIGHT REASONS
LOOK FOR THE WIN-WIN WAY
HOW NOT TO WIN
WIN-WIN REQUIRES ADAPTABILITY
HOW TO SAY NO MORE OFTEN
BE MORE KID

CHAPTER 14: LOST DREAMS

A WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES
WHAT STOPS US FROM FOLLOWING OUR
DREAMS?
THE GRAVEYARD OF UNFULFILLED DREAMS
AND INTENTIONS
POSSIBILITY VS. NECESSITY
IN PURSUIT OF CERTAINTY
HOW TO CONNECT WITH YOUR INNER KID
BE MORE KID

Part V: LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL (AND
IT'S NOT ANOTHER TRAIN).

CHAPTER 15: MUM KNOWS BEST

'NO SUCH WORD AS CAN'T'
'YOUR SCHOOL DAYS ARE THE BEST YEARS
OF YOUR LIFE'
'IF IFS AND ANDS WERE POTS AND PANS,
WE'D BE WASHING UP FOREVER'
'DON'T WISH YOUR LIFE AWAY'
'IT'S NOT WHAT HAPPENED, BUT WHAT
HAPPENS NEXT THAT MATTERS'
'IF YOU CAN'T SAY SOMETHING NICE, DON'T
SAY ANYTHING AT ALL'

'WE'LL CROSS THAT BRIDGE WHEN WE
COME TO IT'

'WHERE THERE'S A WILL, THERE'S A WAY'

'THERE'S ONLY ONE PERSON YOU CAN
TRUST IN THIS LIFE AND THAT'S YOURSELF'

'YOU CAN'T JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER'
BE MORE KID

CHAPTER 16: JUST FOR FUN

ATTITUDE AND RESILIENCE

HOW TO DEVELOP RESILIENCE

THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY

SPONTANEITY IS KEY

FUN VS. ENJOYMENT

HOW TO FIND YOUR FUN

WHAT'S STOPPING YOU FROM HAVING FUN?

BE MORE KID

CHAPTER 17: IT'S RIGHT FOR RIGHT NOW

WAITING FOR INSPIRATION

THERE IS NO 'WRONG' PATH

MAKE SURE YOU'RE MOVING FORWARD

YOU ONLY FAIL IF YOU GIVE UP

DON'T BOX YOURSELF IN

HOW TO MAKE CHANGES

YOU ALWAYS KNOW THE RIGHT THING TO
DO

RIGHT FOR RIGHT NOW

BE YOU

BE MORE KID

Part VI: THE ART & SCIENCE OF UNDERTHINKING

CHAPTER 18: KEEPING IT SIMPLE

WHY DO YOU ENJOY BEING ON HOLIDAY?

WHY DO PEOPLE LONG TO ESCAPE?

HOW DO YOU START TO RECTIFY THIS AND
REDRESS THE BALANCE?

AUDIT YOUR LIFE

ASK HOW YOU CAN USE TIME MORE
EFFECTIVELY

HOW TO ASSESS YOUR LIFE

BE MORE KID

CHAPTER 19: IT'S NOT PERSONAL

WHAT WOULD A KID DO?

HOW DO YOU ADOPT THE MINDSET OF IT
NOT BEING PERSONAL?

RESPOND, DON'T REACT

THE WORLD IS A MIRROR

WHAT COULD YOU LEARN?

REVERTING TO DEFAULT PROGRAMMING

ACCEPT WHAT YOU'RE CAPABLE OF

BE MORE KID

CHAPTER 20: BE EXCITED

EXCITEMENT COMES FROM MEANING

WHY DO WE LOSE OUR EXCITEMENT FOR
LIFE?

WHY SHOULD YOU BE EXCITED?

CONTROLLED EXCITEMENT

HOW DO YOU BEGIN FEELING EXCITED
AGAIN?

BE MORE KID

[CHAPTER 21: PLAY MORE](#)

[WHY IS PLAY IMPORTANT?](#)

[LIVING IN THE MOMENT](#)

[BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS](#)

[WHAT IS PLAY?](#)

[TIPS TO FIT MORE PLAY INTO YOUR LIFE](#)

[BE MORE KID](#)

[CONCLUSION](#)

[PART I-STUCK AND SETTling FOR](#)

[PART II-REDISCOVERING YOU](#)

[PART III-UNCONDITIONAL LOVE](#)

[PART IV-PUTTING YOURSELF FIRST](#)

[PART V-THERE'S LIGHT AT THE END OF THE
TUNNEL \(AND IT'S NOT ANOTHER TRAIN\)](#)

[PART VI-THE ART & SCIENCE OF
UNDERTHINKING](#)

[BE MORE KID: HOW TO ESCAPE THE GROWN UP
TRAP AND LIVE LIFE TO THE FULL](#)

[WHERE TO GO NEXT](#)

[EXERCISE GLOSSARY](#)

[NLP GLOSSARY](#)

[ABOUT THE AUTHORS](#)

[INDEX](#)

[END USER LICENSE AGREEMENT](#)

OMG this book is so me! I always say a day is wasted without laughter. The tips and stories shared by Ed, Mark & Nicky in this book will help you to live a life filled with more fun, joy and enthusiasm... who doesn't want more of that!!?

Alison Hammond, TV Presenter

Kids are so authentic and there's no reason for us to lose that when we're older. Kids see the wonder and awe in the smallest things every day. The concept and practical suggestions in *Be More Kid* remind us how important it is to bring out the best in ourselves and how we can do that in way that also brings out the best in others.

Ben Shephard, TV Presenter

This book gives you the tools to bring the belief, energy and passion you had as a child into your current life with transformational results.

Sarah Stirk, TV Presenter, Sky Sports & Entrepreneur

As a kid growing up in Birmingham, all I wanted to do was become a chef and have the most successful restaurant in Birmingham. This book reminds us of the important things that make us happy, and it gives down to earth, practical advice to make sure we are being true to who we really are and living our own dreams.

Glynn Purnell, (the Yummy Brummie) Michelin-starred chef

This concept really works well both personally and in business. It's what we've built the HDY Culture on and is the glue that binds us together.

Geoff Percy, Non-Exec Chair of HDY Agency, SLG and H Bronnley.co.uk

Be More Kid is a completely fresh approach to personal development that aligns with my passion for health and fitness. Never underestimate the positive effect that playing and having fun can add to both life and business. I still play with toys everyday - they've just got bigger!

Alan Barratt, CEO Grenade

**ED JAMES
MARK TAYLOR
NICKY TAYLOR**

BE MORE KID

**HOW TO ESCAPE THE GROWN UP
TRAP AND LIVE LIFE TO THE FULL!**



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May this book speak to the child within us all and set them
free ...

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Maddie, Thea, Evie and Freya – constant reminders that we all need to be more kid!

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We express our heartfelt appreciation to all of the children who took part in our research for the book, you provided us with endless joy, listening to your views on the world; thank you also to their parents for playing your part in our research and to everyone who has openly shared with us their problems, confidences and optimism for life, we listened and we sincerely hope this book will be of benefit to you.

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Many thanks also to Wiley for believing in us, right from the beginning we have loved that you share our excitement and enthusiasm for *Be More Kid!* We are grateful for the

ideas that you bring, your endless support and for giving us the opportunity to share this book with so many people.

Last but not least, we are thankful for the journey that each of us has travelled, the lessons that life has taught us, the expertise that we have gained along the way and the privilege that we now have to be able to share this with others. If we are able to Make THE Difference to just one person, then we have achieved our purpose.

INTRODUCTION

As Rachael sat in the chair, she seemed to diminish in size. It was as though she had left the façade, the one she showed to the rest of the world, at the door. This was the real Rachael, the person with fears and doubts, unsure of herself and exhausted from pretending.

To her family and colleagues she appeared confident and self-assured, knowing exactly what she wanted from life and doing what was needed to make it happen. On the inside she felt far from confident, she felt as though she was never enough and she had lost her way.

She no longer knew what she wanted.

What she did know was that she was tired. She knew that to everyone else her life looked idyllic and she knew she should be grateful for what she had, but there was something missing.

What was worse was that Rachael believed that she was the only person who felt this way. Yet the previous week it had been Jo sitting there saying virtually the same thing. A couple of days before that it was Tom.

Tom had shared something he felt deeply ashamed of, something he didn't feel he could tell anyone. It was a huge weight on his shoulders. He felt as though he had suddenly woken up one day and found himself with a wife, a large mortgage, three children and an expensive car. He hated his job but he was stuck with it – he desperately needed the money – so he went to work day after day; he was bored and he felt like running away, trapped in a life he didn't enjoy.

For Jo, everything irritated her. She found herself shouting at the kids and her husband for small things that she knew weren't even important, but she couldn't seem to stop herself. She was overeating, drinking more than she knew was good for her and avoiding exercise, even though she knew she would feel better for it if she made the effort. She had started making silly mistakes at work, and she wanted to get her life back on track before it became worse than it already was.

Rachael, Tom, Jo ... and all of the others before them and who will probably follow them, their lives weren't how they wanted them to be.

As kids we have big dreams, anything and everything seems possible, and we believe that there is so much time ahead of us to achieve those dreams. Then over time we stop thinking about those dreams and ambitions, we lose the motivation and determination that we once had ... and we don't even notice it.

The great thing is that the resources we had when we were kids are still there; we've just forgotten how to use them.

In 2011, Bronnie Ware – an Australian nurse – wrote a book called *The Top Five Regrets of the Dying*. Bronnie Ware cared for people in the last 12 weeks of their life and recorded the common themes that patients had regarding regrets and what, on reflection, they would have done differently in their life. These are the five regrets that were mentioned most frequently:

1. I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me.
2. I wish I hadn't worked so hard.
3. I wish I'd had the courage to express my feelings.
4. I wish I'd stayed in touch with my friends.

5. I wish I had let myself be happier.

We have written this book, *Be More Kid: How to Escape the Grown Up Trap and Live Life to the Full*, for everyone who wants to get the very best from their life, so that no-one need have these same regrets. It's not a self-improvement book about giving up chocolate or alcohol, which you may be relieved to hear, but rather a book about changing your deeper mindset to understand what really matters to you, and being happy.

We have included practical exercises for you throughout the book. To get the most out of it, these exercises should be completed as you read through each chapter, and it's our intention that you read the book in chapter order, as each chapter builds on the previous one. There are also additional resources available on the website at www.be-more-kid.co.uk, which gives you the opportunity to download electronic copies of the full version of the exercises. You will also find additional exercises, as well as videos and access to podcasts, that focus on some of the topics discussed in the book.

Parts of the book may make you feel uncomfortable, parts may challenge your thinking – that's ok. Change means going outside of your comfort zone, and there are no wrong feelings or responses or answers. All we ask is that you have an open mind and give it a go.

Have you ever noticed how differently children react to things that might incapacitate an adult?

Ed's story

When my little girl was six, she broke her arm. She was playing with her brothers on the top bunk and fell off, landing badly on her arm. I still remember hearing the thud from downstairs when she landed. The reason I'm telling you this is because this is the moment that made me look at her, and in fact all kids, in a totally different light.

Back to my daughter and the starting point to this 'philosophy'. She coped incredibly. The only time she cried was when she first fell. She then handled every little thing that was thrown at her. The operation was stress-free, she enjoyed choosing a sling and cast because she was able to have her favourite colour - pink! She proudly told everyone at school what had happened and how long she'd be without the use of her arm for. In short, she not only accepted it, but totally embraced it. She opened drawers with her good arm and closed them with her head. I still have a picture of her at Disney on Ice smiling and proudly showing her pink sling off!

This story shows that it's not what happens to you, but how you react to things that determine happiness and success.

Comparing a child's typical response to how an adult would react in a similar situation, and contemplating other comparisons between kids and adults, we realised how many amazing resources we have as a kid that we lose touch with as we grow into adults, and how much we would all positively benefit from being able to reconnect with these resources again, combining them with the knowledge and experience that we now have as adults.

Research we've carried out over the last three years, in preparation for writing this book, has shown us that there are far too many people who are not happy; and there are a number of common reasons that they give for this.

They are not happy because they are not doing the things that are important to them, and feel guilty for wanting to. They don't have the relationships that they crave. They are yearning to be accepted for who they are, rather than feeling the need to fulfil other people's expectations. Feeling full of doubt and having self-limiting beliefs around confidence and trust, trapped by finances, in jobs and relationships that are not working for them. People feel stuck and they don't know how to free themselves.

Surely there must be more to life ... ?

When there are so many people who are so desperately unhappy, often leading them to anxiety and depression, you might question what prevents them from changing their lives?

The problem is that we are not taught how to control our emotions; we are not taught that we can actually change our thinking if it doesn't get us the outcomes we want, and we're not given the tools that we need to do that. There is a common mentality that we are not in control of our own thinking, not in control of our own lives – that things just happen to us. An attitude of blame is prevalent. The problem is that whilst we continue to absolve ourselves from responsibility and avoid being accountable as individuals, we are not the driver in our own lives, we are merely passengers, and therefore completely disempowered.

Our desired outcome for writing this book is to help you become the driver in your life, to assist you in recognising and reconnecting with some of the resources that you once

had as a kid, and help you use those resources together with the knowledge and experience that you now have as an adult, to live a life that is more fulfilled and content.

Will challenges still present themselves? Yes of course! Life will still happen; yet you will be more resilient to those challenges when they do arise. And remember: if you keep doing things the same way, nothing is going to change.

We are sharing our years of expertise in human behaviour, as well as our own experiences of how we have risen to life's challenges, so that you can improve your life for the better, and to show you how you can have fun while doing it. This book is all about how to live a better life and 'Be More Kid!'

Part I

STUCK AND SETTling FOR

In January 2018 we sent out a survey to a group of adults asking them lots of different questions about their lives. The results that came back were pretty conclusive. Most people felt that they are 'stuck'.

Things weren't terrible, but there was this nagging sense that there must be something better, that they should be doing something more. Everything had become predictable, every year was the same, and people felt like they couldn't make a change. Their only solution was to numb themselves with food or alcohol, or escape with a two-week holiday once a year.

We call this the 'Grey Zone'.

The Grey Zone is the place where many of us ultimately end up because we settle for less than we know we can have. Because it's easy and comfortable. Because it's the thing that everyone does. Go to school, maybe go to university, get a job, find a partner, get married, have kids, get a dog, and play out the same years on repeat until you retire, then die. And that's your life.

Just 'good enough'. Isn't that a terrifying thought? What happened to the dreams you had when you were a kid? What about all the big things you wanted to achieve – or even the little things, like playing an instrument or learning to speak Spanish?

The real problem with the Grey Zone is that we don't feel in control. There are so many external pressures trying to keep us stuck. Advertising everywhere says we won't be

complete without some new material possession or package holiday that we can't afford, so we buy it. It makes us feel good for a couple of days, and then it's straight back to the Grey Zone. It's a trap that so many of us fall into: we get promoted into the well-paid job, move into a nice house with a mortgage, buy a car on finance, live a life we can't afford ... and then there's no way out.

If you begin to hate the job, well, too bad. Now you need the money to pay off the debt. To quote Fight Club: 'We buy things we don't need with money we don't have to impress people we don't like.' Sound familiar?

The end result is that we feel like passengers in our own lives, not in control, seeing ourselves running on a treadmill without knowing how to get off. The truth is that we do have control. It is totally possible to get off. In this first part we'll be bringing your attention to some of the common Grey Zone feelings, and why things are the way they are. It's important to really understand what's going on and where you're at before trying to make changes, so let's dive in.

CHAPTER 1

WHY ARE YOU CHOOSING TO BE UNHAPPY?

Something we have found that many people have in common in the Grey Zone is that they wish their lives were better, and they spend time thinking and daydreaming about how things could be different. While having dreams for the future is great, Grey Zone daydreaming is different.

It's not being excited for something you're working towards, but rather wishing for an escape from where you're at without actually doing anything about it. Or knowing that you're capable of doing something amazing, and fantasising about doing it, but then making excuses and rationalisations for why you're not trying it out – as one of our survey respondents said, 'Life's getting in the way'. Empty wishing without any real motivation or intention to take action is not getting you anywhere.

Grey Zone inhabitants don't take any action because they don't really believe that what they dream about could come true, or are terrified of failing. And many people become bitter that they don't have what they want already. They stop truly dreaming about what they could achieve, and start wishing they had already achieved it. It's a kind of giving up; resigning themselves to the comfortable grey life, while simultaneously wanting to escape.

Kids aren't like this.

Kids dream about being an astronaut, or a ballerina, or a pilot, and they really think that's what they'll be one day. There are no limitations on what's possible. They don't worry about whether they'll succeed or fail. When they

play-pretend that they're an astronaut on a spaceship going to the moon, they know that it's play, but the enjoyment they get from it is as if it's real. They're not annoyed that they aren't an actual astronaut yet! Quite the opposite: for them, imagining what it would be like is motivating, it encourages them to read books on space and look through their telescope, and they feel fulfilled.

Then gradually school teaches them that trying and failing is bad – that there are wrong answers, and that it's embarrassing. Adults may well tell them that their dreams are unlikely to happen, and as they grow up they start to believe it too. We are programmed as we grow up to be filled with doubt and negativity, so that doing what we actually want and making changes to get there seems incredibly difficult. Impossible even.

Part of the work we do as coaches is to get rid of all this negative programming so that people can start to dream like they did as a child, and to start making decisions that are actually right for them so they can experience the outcomes they want.

The art of play is something that kids naturally understand, and adults often don't. It's enjoying being in the moment, and the process of getting to where you want to be, every bit as much as enjoying the end destination. It's about having fun right here, right now, as part of the journey to what you want long-term. Compare that to how most of us think: wishing that we were somewhere else, someone else, doing something else, but never believing that it's possible, whilst at the same time feeling life is unfair that you don't have it, what a paradox!. In this case, kids' thinking makes more sense. When was the last time you just let go and played like a kid?

The bottom line – the reason behind all this daydreaming – is that people want to be happy. And it's a good aspiration.

There've been lots of surveys and studies about happiness over the years, and patterns are starting to emerge on what it takes. One group of researchers from Harvard¹, after looking at a lot of data over a long period of time, suggested that the secret is choosing to be happy with whatever you do, strengthening your closest relationships, steering the direction in which you want to contribute, doing more of what you're good at and taking care of yourself physically, financially and emotionally. We'll be looking at a lot of these ideas throughout the rest of the book.

The problem today is that people confuse happiness with short-term pleasure. Many of us chase hits of feel-good brain chemicals, such as dopamine, that rapidly fade away rather than building a life of deeper contentment. We're happiness machines bouncing from one external thing to another – the new car, the new partner, the new shoes; even the one-day self-development motivational event that gets you fired up but doesn't get you to actually change – never looking inward to make things better.

This is partly because we don't always know what is good for us, but also because short-term dopamine hits don't require effort. You can always stop off for a burger and fries at the drive-thru on the way home from a job where you're bored out of your mind. But long-term contentment does take work.

Exploring your decisions is a good place to start. Before making a decision, ask yourself whether it's going to only give you short-term pleasure, or contribute to your long-term happiness. Quite often you'll find that it's either one or the other. Eating a bag of doughnuts will give you a hit of dopamine, but if it makes you fat, will it contribute to your long-term happiness? Probably not.