What I Learned and Wisdom Gained from the BU Happiness Project

1. Happiness doesn’t find you. You find it.
2. Happiness is not a thing or a possession. It starts from within and emanates outward.
3. Happiness takes effort. It requires a conscious decision and the will to make it so. (This was so clearly demonstrated in the story about St. Theresa that Gretchen Rubin recounts in her book “The Happiness Project” where St. Theresa resolves to be happy for the sake of her Sisters even in the midst of great personal pain and suffering. Her success is so complete that the Sisters are almost jealous believing that for her happiness takes no effort at all!)
4. Happiness is a paradigm switch from believing that your unhappiness is YOU, to believing that you can create a new self image that is just as real and authentic.
5. The rewards for being happy and acting happy (generosity, being non-critical, caring for others, smiling…actually all acts of selflessness and thankfulness) are much greater than the benefits you perceive you get from being unhappy.
6. For me happiness is sometimes the result of letting go of fear and allowing myself to live more fully.
7. Another great insight from the Gretchen Rubin’s book: Who do you look up to in life? What are the characteristics of that person(s)? Those are your undeveloped qualities. Nurture them in yourself.
8. Give yourself a break. Everyone suffers and struggles with life no matter what or how they appear to be. You are not alone.
9. Being goofy is fun.
10. So is singing out of key with your favorite song, dancing, and hugging your friends.
11. Find people who validate the happy you. They are the friends you want to have. New friends won’t even know there used to be an unhappy you. That is mind altering!
12. Love, Love, Love. The more you give, the more that comes your way. It is true and it helps get you through the hard times.
13. I found this quote from Mother Theresa while we were conducting our “Happiness Experiment” and it had quite an impact on me, so I would like to share it with you:

“People are often unreasonable and self-centered. Forgive them anyway.
If you are kind, people may accuse you of ulterior motives. Be kind anyway.
If you are honest, people may cheat you. Be honest anyway.
If you find happiness, people may be jealous. Be happy anyway.
The good you do today may be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway.
Give the world the best you have and it may never be enough. Give your best anyway.
For you see, in the end, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway.”