



## **Book Recommendation**

### The Happiest Man on Earth by Eddie Jaku

I was grateful to read this uplifting and inspiring memoir of Eddie Jaku before his passing in late 2021. The book was published in 2020 as Eddie turned 100, and I found it to be a powerful, heartbreaking, and ultimately hopeful memoir about how happiness can be found even in the darkest of times.

Edward Jaku (born Abraham Salomon Jakubowicz) was a survivor of several German concentration camps during World War II. Most of Eddie's extended family died during the war, although his sister Henni (Johanna) survived. As a tribute to his sister, Eddie changed his name to the affectionate nickname that his sister had called him for many years. For me, it is unimaginable – the pain and suffering that Eddie and countless others experienced and endured – yet somehow, Eddie eventually vowed to smile every day. Along with this inspiring book, Eddie's example of serving as a volunteer at the Sydney Jewish Museum for almost 30 years is equally inspiring. He volunteered to pay tribute to those who were lost by telling his story, sharing his wisdom, and living his best possible life. Eddie's final shift at the museum was in March 2020, a month before his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, when it closed due to the COVID pandemic.

Eddie readily acknowledges for many years, he was most certainly not a happy man. He questioned why he was still alive and whether he truly wanted to live. He refers to the day he held his eldest son, Michael, in his arms as a true miracle. "In that one moment, my heart was healed and my happiness returned in abundance. From that day on, I realised I was the luckiest man on Earth. I made the promise that from that day until the end of my life, I would be happy, polite, helpful and kind. I would smile."

I'm not sure I can fully grasp one of his many powerful quotes within the book – 'Life can be beautiful if you make it beautiful. It is up to you.' I somewhat get it at a cognitive level, and now endeavour to understand and embrace it at a spiritual level.

Within the book, Eddie's insights into topics such as friendship, family, ethics, love, hatred, forgiveness, and more can add to our own gaining of personal wisdom, which can, in turn, contribute to our current, unique, personal manifesto. Fortunately, many of us will not experience the horrors of war. Tragically, many of our fellow humans are experiencing the horrors of war as I write this blog – and this is incredibly hard for me to wrestle with.

My love and prayers go out to all, and I thank Eddie for his story.