

Take a Shot at Happiness

How to Write, Direct & Produce the Life You Want

by: Maria Baltazzi, PhD, MFA

On a steamy jungle island in the middle of the South China Sea, a new television show is about to come to its shocking conclusion. A small television stage lit by tiki torches illuminates a show host, a jury of seven contestants sitting on tree stumps, and the final two runners-up for a million dollars. It was season one of CBS's competition show, *Survivor*, a show that will become one of the longest-running unscripted series—and one of the most beloved. Maria Baltazzi was one of the original supervising producers.

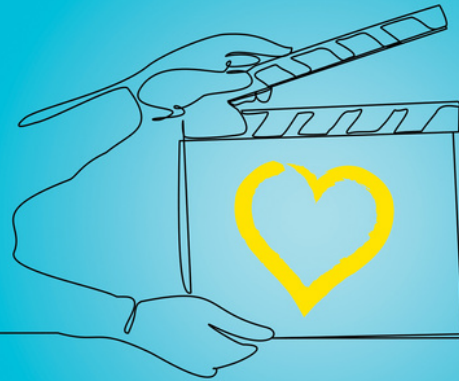
Survivor strips its contestants of everything but their wits while they battle it out to see who will be the winner of a life-changing prize. In watching this, Maria realized that the contestants learned things about themselves that they might never have known before. During the production of this show, Maria realized that she could not be her true self until she stripped back the negativity that was clouding her life and made more self-affirming actions that would lead her to what she truly wanted.

This book is Maria's insights about being happy learned from her time in the entertainment industry, observing people and events, traveling, and studying wellbeing. Within these pages is a practical guide for a creative path to happiness through taking photographs with your camera phone, journaling about things that matter, and being part of a supportive community.

You can create a healthier state of being and have fun doing it. Even when your world turns upside down, you can still be the writer, director, and producer of the life you want.

MARIA BALTAZZI, PhD, MFA
EMMY AWARD-WINNING PRODUCER

TAKE A SHOT AT



HAPPINESS

HOW TO WRITE, DIRECT &
PRODUCE THE LIFE YOU WANT

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About Maria Baltazzi



Maria Baltazzi is a Happiness Explorer. Her calling is to help you become happier and live more consciously. Maria's experience as an Emmy-winning TV producer, wellbeing teacher, world traveler, and luxury travel designer specializing in transformative adventures has given her a unique lens into conscious living.

Like all of us, Maria has faced challenges personally and professionally. Instead of letting life setbacks defeat her, Maria was inspired to embark on a life-changing journey where she realized eight Happiness Essentials that create a happier, more fulfilling life. Now, Maria helps you discover your path to happiness in a fun, creative way that combines journaling and phone photography.

Maria holds an MFA in film from ArtCenter College of Design and a PhD in Conscious-Centered Living from the University of Sedona. Additional studies include Mindfulness Meditation Teaching Training with Jack Kornfield and Tara Brach, Primordial Sound Meditation Teacher Training from The Chopra Center, Happiness Studies with Tal Ben-Shahar, Positive Neuroplasticity Training with Rick Hanson, Spiritual Psychology with Ron and Mary Hulnick at the University of Santa Monica, Positive Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania, the Science of Happiness at the University of Berkley, and an Inner MBA from MindfulNYU.

In her own happiness journey, Maria finds joy in giving back. She has walked over 7500 miles to raise funds for charity, including marathons on all seven continents, and is still going. Maria's adventurous life has also involved climbing the 15,000-foot trail to Machu Picchu, leading African safaris, making pilgrimages along the Camino de Santiago, summiting Mt. Kilimanjaro twice, and trekking to Everest Base Camp.

Maria has developed and produced shows throughout the world. She was one of the original supervising producers of the TV mega hit, Survivor. She is a member of both the Producers and Directors Guilds of America, a Fellow National Member of The Explorers Club, and an Advisor for the Transformational Travel Council. Given her diverse experiences, expertise, and infectious enthusiasm, Maria is a genuine inspiration for those seeking to live their best lives.

Suggested Talking Points for Maria Baltazzi

- What inspired you to write *Take a Shot at Happiness*?
- What is the secret to happiness?
- Can you really achieve sustainable happiness and what does that look like?
- Why your approach to happiness versus anyone else's currently being talked about?
- Why did you choose to also use stories from Film and TV?
- What did you learn from producing on *Survivor* that stayed with you after you left the show?
- What is the biggest takeaway for *Take a Shot at Happiness*?



Praise for *Take a Shot at Happiness*

“I recommend that you take a shot at reading this practical and accessible book on happiness. Maria Baltazzi offers a creative approach that combines journaling and phone photography activities that help you integrate the concepts she writes about.”

~ Dr. Tal Ben-Shahar, *New York Times* Bestselling Author of *Happier*, Former Harvard Lecturer, and Founder of the Happiness Studies Academy

"As a TV show creator and producer, I understand the power of storytelling to inspire and transform lives — and so does Maria Baltazzi as a seasoned producer. Her book is a compelling inner journey that offers insights from the production trenches and the films and shows we love. Maria offers practical tools and insights to help you achieve a life of happiness and purpose. I highly recommend this book to anyone looking to create positive change in their life from a creative approach."

~Mark Burnett, Executive Producer, *Survivor* and Former Chairman of MGM Worldwide Television Group

"Reading *Take a Shot at Happiness* was like being back on the island with Maria! The same heartfelt approach she took as a producer on *Survivor* can be felt on every page. It's presented in a way that lets you choose to read it cover to cover or go specifically to sections that are speaking to you right now. It was a great reminder of how quickly you can change your state of mind and the powerful impact that intention can have on your life."

~Jeff Probst, Host and Executive Producer of *Survivor*

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Praise for *Take a Shot at Happiness*

“One of my favorite quotes is, ‘you can't receive when you're transmitting!’. As a passionate storyteller, I love learning from others. From the moment I met and worked with Maria, more than 20 years ago, I quickly understood her to be a deep thinker. A soulful reflective person who is constantly on a path of discovery. I share Maria's enthusiasm for making the most of every precious moment we are alive. Focusing on what's right instead of what's wrong, being grateful, forgiving, and being surrounded by love. While there is no sure fire method to happiness, Maria's book will give you a good shot at getting there with entertaining life lessons on how to live, love, and learn.”

-Phil Keoghan, MNZM, Emmy Award Winning Producer and Host of *Amazing Race* and *Tough as Nails*

"I'm not an especially spiritual person, but always believed in 'trusting the process.' Maria Baltazzi's brilliant roadmap creates a clear, concise process for anyone looking to improve their balance of mind, body, and spirit. As someone in professional transition, I found this book both incredibly instructive and inspiring."

-Kelly Kahl, Former President of CBS Entertainment

“So proud of you, Maria. You came into my intro screenwriting class and showed imagination, the ability to execute, and above all, the drive and desire to write, that is so important, as important as ability and the predisposition to learn. You got away from writing for many years but still used a lot of those same storytelling muscles in your TV endeavors. Then you went back to school and truly dedicated yourself and succeeded in becoming, yes, an actual writer—a published author. I am envious of you and what you have done. I feel what I do, by comparison, is more word management and craft, to which there are many shortcuts and ways to fudge and cheat and hide. In real writing, there is nowhere to hide. Congratulations on becoming the latter.”

- Ron Osborn, Emmy Winning Writer, *Moonlighting*, *West Wing*, *Duck Man: Private Dick/Family Man*, *Met Joe Black*





Praise for *Take a Shot at Happiness*

"Captivating and uplifting, *Take a Shot at Happiness* feels like a conversation with a trusted friend. It's a heartfelt and inspiring guide that reminds us of the power we all have within to create a more fulfilling and authentic life. Maria's unique perspective, tips, and engaging creative exercises will encourage you to tap into your inner creativity to uncover your own path to happiness. This is a must-read if you're ready to start your own journey of self-discovery or want a fresh perspective."

-Roma Downey, OBE, Emmy-nominated Actress, Producer, *New York Times* Bestselling Author

"Television producer, writer, world traveler, adventurer. Maria Baltazzi has done it all -- and on her own terms. *Take a Shot at Happiness* offers a compelling and very personal look into the world of creativity. Maria shows us how this power within each of us leads to peace, wisdom, and a daily path forward. Recommended for anyone hoping to make a leap of faith to live their best life."

-Martin Dugard, #1 *New York Times* Bestselling Author of *Taking Paris*

"This book is an invaluable tool, so effectively laying out multiple cases and methods for 'taking a shot at happiness'. Impressive work and applicable to so many facets of our lives. Maria offers fact-based reasoning to get to the change or changes we may want or need and also, integrated calls to action that help get us to taking that shot. She makes the case so effectively for the changes toward happiness we need to make (and can make). And Maria takes us there, toward those changes, without the scary upheaval often preventing us from taking that shot."

-Mark Thompson, Two-time Emmy Award Winning Newscaster and Writer, Specials Host and Producer for the Fox Broadcasting Company Stations





Praise for *Take a Shot at Happiness*

“This is a remarkable book from a new author with a unique point of view. Baltazzi started her personal journey by working in the world’s most intense pressure cooker of human behavior. It wasn’t in a University or a Science Lab - she was out in a jungle directing the TV show *Survivor*. There she saw people under enormous stress behaving badly - and sometimes beautifully. That prompted her journey to discover how people facing enormous obstacles can choose to be happy. So one Ph.D. later, she has compiled her years of observation, research and critical thinking into the most unique guide to Happiness that I have read. So what’s with the ‘Directing’ metaphor? Like on a TV show, the Director makes decisions and the Crew follows them. What are you going to be in your life? the Director or the Crew? This book is a step by step guide on how to take control of your future happiness.”

-Michael J. Miller, Emmy Award Winner, Executive Producer of Specials for Networks including Discovery and National Geographic

“Wow! What a fun and creative way to find your happiness. I love the way Maria weaves stories from her own life experiences including her travel adventures, her TV shows, movies she loves, mindfulness training, personal relationships, and growth. Full of relatable insights, affirmations, and other tools to easily re-set you into happiness. Fun to do, simple to implement, immediate results. I had no idea I needed a book like this until I read it. Love it! Check it out!”

-Brenda Lee Lau, Award Winning Director/Writer

