



Schmidt, Mathilde Apelt
**HAPPINESS—A MATTER OF
THE MIND:**
Vantage Point of an Octogenarian
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In this self-help book, Schmidt hands out practical advice and common sense ideas about happiness, with the benefit of hindsight.

Schmidt expresses many of her main ideas through discussion of movies, books, theater, opera and poetry, but her primary source of inspiration is the Bible. The author alternates between thoughtful prose and illustrative stories to share her message of the keys to happiness. Chapters center on Christian values, punctuated by Schmidt's examples from literature or vignettes from her own life. Occasionally she includes sweeping, unsubstantiated generalizations such as, "Sleeplessness is often caused by lies and unkind things you said to others," or "Chubby people tend to be more jovial, easy-going, and happier" or "Happy families always seem to have time to enjoy a friendly cup of coffee with neighbors, to call their family members for a chat, and to play with their children and pets." While some of these statements

make only brief appearances, the author is fond of repeating one particular point—"A truly happy person has some kind of religion." Schmidt is well-read and includes copious references for readers who are interested in following up on certain points. Her love of theater and the arts is evident, adding an interesting element to the straightforward, conversational text. She is also careful to explain her literary references, so that quotes from Goethe, German poet Friedrich von Schiller, Kant, Pushkin and the like are useful even to readers unfamiliar with their work. Schmidt was not always happy and views happiness as something worth striving for. Her approach is that happiness can be taught, though a great deal of perseverance is needed to achieve it.

A predictable, superficial approach to the frantic search for happiness.

