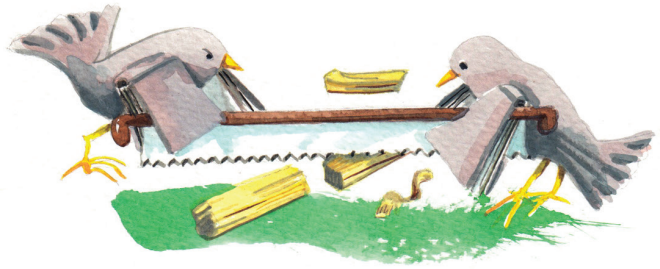

HAPPINESS BOOK CLUB

Making matters

This month, Vanessa King of Action for Happiness and author of *10 Keys To Happier Living* recommends *Why We Make Things And Why It Matters* by Peter Korn

Recently, I've had a yearning to craft or create something new, so I was immediately drawn to this book. It's a beautifully written account of one man's journey, making beautiful items over his lifetime. Author Peter Korn learned to build furniture over many years, a creative process that helped him to discover who he was and what a good life really meant to him.

Korn's process was slow, gradually learning skills and growing in competence, making lots of mistakes and facing many challenges along the way. But, eventually, he was able to design and craft his own pieces, seeing the miracle of 'a thought made substance'; an idea sketched on paper becoming a real object, imbued with meaning for both the maker and those who interact with his product. Importantly, Korn discovered it's not the final piece that mattered but the creative process. Fulfilment, he says, comes from creating the table, not the satisfaction of sitting at it.

In his view, the desire to make things is fundamentally human and is a grounding, spiritually sustaining experience. 'Thinking with your hands', as he describes, is different from doing so purely with your head – as is the predominant case in our lives today. Making uses head, heart and hands, working together in balance. It uses our 'whole person'.

This made sense to me. I'm lucky that I am able to be creative with words and ideas in my work, but I'm craving making something more physical, too. So, I've made a start and I've been learning to draw. As Korn notes, 'The good life is not a Shangri-La, waiting to be stumbled upon, but one constructed from the materials at hand.'

Next month, we're reading 'Presence' by Amy Cuddy (Orion, £8.99)

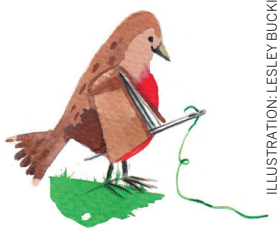

ILLUSTRATION: LESLEY BUCKINGHAM

Questions to discuss at your book club

- Have you felt a sense of fulfilment from making an object? What did you make?
- What type of 'making' are you instinctively drawn to? What would you like to try to make?
- What is the biggest obstacle to being able to do this? What is one thing that you could do to overcome that challenge?

Why We Make Things & Why It Matters by Peter Korn (Vintage, £8.99)