

WHY AREN'T I HAPPY?

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by

Eugene Roberts.

**Dedicated to my dear family.
God bless them.**

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Part 3.

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Chapter 1

What Makes *You* Happy?

Here's what some famous people had to say about happiness:

"BEING HAPPY IS SOMETHING YOU HAVE TO LEARN. I OFTEN SURPRISE MYSELF BY SAYING 'WOW, THIS IS IT...I GUESS I'M HAPPY. I'VE GOT A HOME I LOVE; A CAREER I LOVE; I'M EVEN FEELING MORE AND MORE AT PEACE WITH MYSELF'. IF THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE TO HAPPINESS, LET ME KNOW. I'M AMBITIOUS FOR THAT TOO."

Harrison Ford.

"Happiness Is a Warm Gun"

**Lennon/McCartney
The Beatles (The White Album).**

*"Most people are about as happy
as they make up their minds to be."*

Abraham Lincoln.

**"Happiness in intelligent people is the rarest thing I know."
ERNEST HEMINGWAY.**

- If you want happiness for an hour...take a nap.***
- If you want happiness for a day...go fishing.***
- If you want happiness for a month...get married.***
- If you want happiness for a year...inherit great wealth.***
- If you want happiness for a lifetime...help others.***

Chinese Proverb.

“I can’t quite explain it, but I don’t believe one can ever be unhappy for long provided one does just exactly what one wants to and when one wants to.”

Evelyn Waugh (1903-1966)
(Decline and Fall, 1928).

“Happiness: a good bank account, a cook, and a good digestion.”

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778).

“Beer is living proof that God loves us and wants us to be happy.”

Benjamin Franklin.

“Nobody really cares if you’re miserable, so you might as well be happy.”

Cynthia Nelms.

WHY AREN'T I HAPPY?

“Be happy while you’re living, for you’re a long time dead.”
Scottish Proverb.

**“Happiness is having a large, loving, caring close-knit family
.....in another city.”**

GEORGE BURNS.

**“Some cause happiness wherever they go;
others whenever they go.”**

Oscar Wilde.

**“WINNERS ARE
GRINNERS!”**

Automobile Advert.

**“We act as though comfort and luxury
were the chief requirements of life,
when all that we need to make us really
happy is something to be enthusiastic
about.”**

John Mason Brown.

DON'T WORRY, BE HAPPY.

Song title.

**“Yesterday is ashes, tomorrow wood.
Only today does the fire burn brightly.”**

Eskimo proverb.

**If you depend on
someone for your
happiness, you
are becoming a slave.**

BHAGWAN SHREE RAJNEESH.

**“Fine food, fine clothes, fine women, and fine
cars...what else is there in life?”**

Eugene Roberts.

**“It is our job to make women
unhappy with what they have.”**

B. Earl Puckett,
(On advertising...
Book of Twentieth-Century
American Quotations, 1992).

***“If you obey all the rules,
you miss all the fun.”***

Katherine Hepburn.

“The trouble with being in the rat race is that even if you win you’re still a rat!”

Lily Tomlin.

“Happiness is a positive cash flow.”

Fred Adler.

“When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has opened for us.”

Helen Keller.

“You say grace before meals. All right, but I say grace before the concert, and grace before the play and pantomime, and grace before I open a book, and grace before sketching, painting, swimming, fencing, boxing, walking, playing, dancing, and grace before I dip the pen in ink.”

G. K. Chesterton.

Happy...contented with one’s lot.

THE CONCISE OXFORD DICTIONARY.

WHY AREN'T I HAPPY?



To be continued...

How Happy is Everyone Else?



Part 1.

So, what is happiness, and how do we measure it?

Happiness might be defined as the overall, ongoing sense of well being or contentment of an individual. In other words, how fulfilling, satisfying, meaningful and pleasant an individual finds life.

This doesn't include those occasional bursts of extreme happiness which happen from time to time, such as the joy of winning a lottery, the exhilaration of starting a new love affair, or the thrill of seeing your football team win.

Extremes of happiness send our spirits soaring. However, they do so for a relatively short period of time, before dropping back to the underlying more subdued overall level of contentment or happiness. These extremes of happiness tend not to be long lasting, and may last a matter of days, weeks or months.

Rather, true happiness is better seen as the enduring sense of well being an individual feels. This may vary from *“life is good...I love my life”*, to *“life sucks...I hate my life!”*

Every living being walking the earth today shares the same basic wants and desires:

- ❑ Food and shelter.
- ❑ Support and affection of family.
- ❑ Community acceptance.

WHY AREN'T I HAPPY?

- ❑ Good health.
- ❑ The love of a partner.
- ❑ Gainful employment.
- ❑ Creative expression.
- ❑ Creature comforts.
- ❑ Political, cultural and religious freedom.

HOW TO MEASURE HAPPINESS.

Social psychologists are currently using modern research techniques, and the amazing power of computers to collect data and learn more about that elusive pursuit of people...the quest for happiness.

Globalisation has effectively turned the Earth into a “global village”. This has occurred thanks to improved travel between nations and peoples, advanced satellite transmission of television around the planet, and the breath-taking speed of Internet communication.

Consequently, researchers have more recently been able to study happiness in far greater depth than was previously possible.

An enormous amount of data has been amassed and analysed over recent decades. Hundreds of surveys have been taken from hundreds of thousands of people scattered across one hundred and forty countries.

As researchers sifted through the masses of information, one not so surprising fact soon became clear. Despite the enormous differences in living standards, lifestyles and cultures that sometimes exist between the various peoples around the globe...one reassuring common thread ran consistently through it all.

And what was that common thread?

The answer to that question can be found in the following extract.

“We wanted to focus very much on the difference between countries, cultures and religions,” says (Duncan) Bridgeman*. “But you don’t have to dig too deep to realise that everybody’s the same. We get up in the morning, run around doing our thing, go back to bed, soon enough we’re all dead and we all love our mums.

Even the poorest people you meet are getting on with their lives. Both Robbie Williams and a down and out in Calcutta have their up days and down days and realising that made a big difference to me.”



Jane Cornwell,

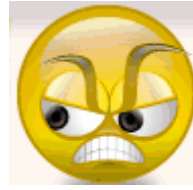
THE AUSTRALIAN, March 30-31,2001.

***Duncan Bridgeman & Jamie Catto – “One Giant Leap” Project (CD and DVD) – Festival/Mushroom.**

“HOW HAPPY ARE YOU?”

Researchers find out how happy people are by asking them to regularly detail their moment-to-moment moods, which are then averaged over a period of time. This relies on individuals reporting honestly how they feel about life and their present circumstances at any given moment, and is called a “subjective assessment”.

This information can be crosschecked by simultaneously asking family and friends of these individuals if they actually appear to be as happy as they profess, and is called an “objective assessment”.



The kind of questions asked includes:

- “*How do you feel about life at this moment?*”
 - *delighted.*
 - *pleased.*
 - *mainly satisfied.*
 - *mixed feelings.*
 - *mainly dissatisfied.*
 - *unhappy.*
 - *terribly unhappy.*

- “*Have you recently felt any of the following?*”
 - *excited.*
 - *proud.*
 - *content.*
 - *upset.*
 - *angry.*
 - *bored.*
 - *restless.*
 - *lonely.*
 - *worried.*
 - *depressed.*

- “*How satisfied are you presently with your life?*” (On a scale of 1 to 10).

- “*How satisfied are you with your life overall?*” (1 to 10).

- “*Would more money make you happier?*”

- “*Do the following bring you happiness?*”
 - *family.* - *religion.* - *lifestyle.*
 - *good health.* - *sex.* - *culture.*
 - *work.* - *your partner.* - *community.*

...and so on.

So...what does the data tell us...just how happy are other people around us, and what makes them more or less happy than ourselves?



MONEY DOESN'T BUY HAPPINESS.

Everyone would agree that an unexpected windfall of a little extra money would certainly be happily welcomed. Wouldn't it be nice to ease the pressure of paying off a few bills, or to spoil ourselves with an unexpected vacation or some other treat?

Surprisingly, the data seems to imply that **people with great wealth and high incomes are, in the main, *not* much happier overall than working-class people who can afford the basic necessities and simple pleasures of life.**

In fact, in the United States, **although American affluence has increased two-fold over the last thirty years, happiness has not increased accordingly with the rise in income.**

Americans today seem to be *less* happy and satisfied than they were thirty years ago, and *more* likely to suffer from anxiety or depression. Although more college students in the U.S. now rate becoming very well-off financially as essential, and their top-rated motivation (twice the percentage of students thirty years ago), teenagers are today *more* likely to commit suicide.

This pattern is also seen in many other highly developed and affluent countries.

The paradox is that living in a wealthy, materialistic society does not necessarily assure greater happiness.

A survey recently carried out in Sweden confirmed that money does not necessarily bring happiness. It also concluded that the higher paid a person was, the less likely they were to appreciate or value a bonus or pay rise. However, it did establish that earning more than your peers does make people happier.

What this seems to tell us is this...wealth is like health...when you have none, you feel miserable.

Yet having it won't guarantee happiness!

DOES AGING AFFECT HAPPINESS?

Nobody looks forward to growing old...some refuse to even contemplate the prospect.

The fact remains, however, that it is inevitable and unavoidable...and it doesn't matter at all whether we try to avoid thinking about it, or take all manner of steps in an effort to delay or deny nature's course. It is part of **the inescapable cycle of life that we are born, we mature, and then we grow old.**

Philosophical types might venture to say that thanks should to be given for the privilege of being lucky enough to grow old...that some much less fortunate people are tragically stricken down in their early years, thus being denied a full and rewarding life.

Interestingly enough, research seems to tell us that **generally, levels of personal satisfaction and wellbeing increase with age.**

It would appear that in spite of the major changes that usually occur in old age (i.e. retiring from one's vocation or work, a lowering of income, and waning health and faculties)...*happiness seems to increase with advancing years.*

A study carried out by psychology Professor Robert Cummins from Deakin University discovered that 87 per cent of people aged over 75 were content with their lives, compared to 72 per cent of 18 to 25 year olds.

It is thought that part of the reason may be that an increase in accumulated wealth over the years (especially once any children have grown up and left home) may bring with it a sense of security. Furthermore, retirement from the pressures of the workplace also finds many people beginning to enjoy their later years where they have more flexibility to enjoy themselves and don't have to do things they find unpleasant or stressful.

Another reason for these higher satisfaction levels among elderly appears to be that **people who feel positive and happy about their lives seem to live longer than those who don't.**

What also seems to change noticeably **as we get older is that our mood-swings tend to become less extreme, more evened out, than when we were young...we mellow in our old age.**

Teenagers appear to be more volatile, with more rapid emotional swings between higher highs and lower lows. A mixture of youthful exuberance, immaturity, insecurity or uncertainty about what the future holds, as well as inexperience, may account for more extreme emotional mood swings.

Perhaps it is the experiences of the journey through life, with all its successes, achievements, disappointments, love, despair and regrets, which enable so many senior citizens to “**grow old gracefully**” and enjoy their twilight years.

TURNING POINTS IN LIFE.

There are key turning points or stages in life, when we will all experience periods of uncertainty, self-doubt, loneliness and often unhappiness.

The passing away of parents, the loss of a partner through divorce or illness...all of these moments can be times of exquisite unhappiness.

Then there is the anguish experienced by youngsters on their first days of school, when for the first time they are plucked away from the comfort of home and their mother's side, and sent off to receive an education...to the stress of striving for good grades in high school and competing for acceptance into university, as we manoeuvre our way towards a future career.

Turning twenty and no longer being a teenager...turning thirty, forty, fifty, etc...are all major milestones in our lives...and often milestones we do not look forward to. Milestones which some find difficult to accept, resulting in periods of turmoil like the “**midlife crisis**”, or the more recently coined “**quarter-life crisis**” (of the mid twenties).

The “midlife crisis” has long been recognised as affliction that strikes many of the baby-boomer generation. After spending a large part of their lives working hard to achieve a successful career, acquire a house on a quarter acre block in the suburbs, and raise and educate the children...some “boomers” find themselves feeling disillusioned, unfulfilled and unhappy with how their lives have turned out.

Some men respond by cutting loose and striking out in search of happiness in new pursuits. The aging wife is replaced with a much younger, more vivacious female partner with whom to hit the nightclubs and bars. The sedate station wagon or sedan makes way for a Harley-Davidson “hog” or a sports car. A hairpiece might be fitted over a balding pate to give that younger look and perhaps an ear stud added as a sign of trendiness. Meanwhile, females suffering a midlife crisis are more likely to seek out the magic touch of a plastic surgeon's knife or needle to help in their makeover.

The “**quarter-life” crisis**, which has been recognised as afflicting many of today's **Generation X**, results from very different anxieties. These twenty-year-olds appear to suffer an earlier crisis as they grow into adulthood. Psychologists suggest this may be caused by the **enormous social changes that have occurred in our modern society over recent decades.**

As well as being highly educated and computer savvy, today's Generation X is very much the product of today's changed society, modern marketing and consumerism. **Their outlook on life and expectations are vastly different from those of the previous generation.**

“Baby boomers” growing into adults fully expected to have a career for life, to leave home and marry in their early twenties, to raise a couple of children, to buy a house and then spend decades paying off the mortgage and the school fees.

“**Generation X**”, on the other hand, is delaying getting married until closer to thirty (if at all), is living home with the parents longer, is more likely to have part-time or casual work, and can expect to change jobs half a dozen times before reaching thirty. Afraid of being tied down by a mortgage, marriage and child raising, more are choosing to travel overseas. Others are choosing to rent and live alone, spending on themselves and enjoying a fast paced consumerism-led life.

Researchers believe that once Generation Xers have survived their “quarter-life crisis” many will eventually settle down with a partner, a house, kids, and a steady career...and won't later suffer the “midlife crisis” experienced by “baby boomers”.

**“I’ve been to the other side,
and let me tell you, son,...
there’s ****ing nothing there!”**



***Kerry Packer.**

* Australia’s richest man, Packer suffered a massive heart attack on the polo field. He was purported to have been “dead” for up to eight minutes before being revived, and claims to have experienced an “out of body experience”.

CAN RELIGION MAKE US HAPPY?

Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, described religion as “an obsessional neurosis”.

Freud suggested that a belief in a God was the result of an “immature infantile helplessness” in people, which made them seek the comfort of an omnipotent protector. **In his opinion, religion was to blame for people living repressed, unhappy and cheerless lives.**

However, numerous polls reveal that **people who are “highly spiritually committed” are actually twice as likely to class themselves as happy as those that are not.**

These individuals state that their faith is very important to them, and that this spiritual commitment gives them the strength to cope with life's traumas and tragedies. Their **faith gives meaning to their lives, and a sense of purpose,** as well as bringing them into a caring community of fellowship with fellow believers, which provides an added sense of security and social support.

There can be no doubting that religious faith, be it Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist...whatever...fills billions of people on this earth with a comforting sense of destiny and purpose.

Their belief in a Creator often allows them to rise above the problems and shortcomings of everyday life and to believe, that in the end, justice and goodness will always prevail against the evils and wrongdoings that abound in this life.

Religion helps many people feel better by encouraging them to confront the big issues of life, to stand back and put matters into perspective. It allows them to put their life under the microscope and recognise the things that really matter.

In doing so it may provide individuals with a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives, which is defined through their faith. **Psychologists agree that people with a strong sense of purpose in life are usually happier.**

So the answer seems to be...**YES**...religion often does bring happiness.



NEXT MONTH...

Part 2.

- Are married people happier?
- Are men happier than women?
- Does sex make us happy?
- Health and happiness.
- Are some cultures happier than others?
- Are you happy at work?