



HOW HAPPY ARE YOU?

In the movies, existential anguish is considered heroic and deep. In real life, the goal is to experience as much happiness as possible, to be at peace with the world and grateful for what we have. But how does one define happiness? What are the basic principles of living a happy life.



RESEARCH HAS SHOWN THAT, AMONG POPULATIONS, THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS CONTRIBUTE TO LIFE'S HAPPINESS:

- WEALTH
- FREEDOM OF CHOICE
- EQUALITY
- SECURITY
- INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY
- MODERNITY
- EDUCATION
- OCCUPATION
- SOCIAL PARTICIPATION
- INTIMATE TIES

The word happiness is synonymous with quality of life or well-being. It denotes that a life is good – but what is good about that life? According to research published recently in the International Journal of Psychology, there are certain elements conducive to happiness:

GOOD LIVING CONDITIONS

This is also referred to as “welfare” or “livability” and may come down to whether your surroundings are habitable and comfortable, which can affect ease of life. Public planning policy makers take this factor into consideration when determining a city’s infrastructure, transportation systems, parks and social initiatives.

ADAPTIVE POTENTIAL

This is also referred to as “capability” or “life-ability” or sometimes simply “health.” It refers to how well equipped we are to cope with the problems of life.

USEFULNESS OF LIFE

For some, the good life must be good for something more than one’s self. It indicates a higher value to which one is dedicated, such as ecological preservation or cultural development. The usefulness of life is weighed against these higher values.

SATISFACTION WITH LIFE

This has to do with the quality of life in the eye of the beholder. The subjective appreciation of life may be the reflection of a positive outlook, even despite various obstacles or drawbacks. Satisfaction can also take the form of pleasures that simply pass through our lives, like a glass of good wine, or an intense peak experience that inspires or enlightens us. It may also define satisfaction with a part of life or a domain of life, such as working life.

WHAT MAKES US HAPPY?

Research has revealed some very specific factors affecting people’s happiness:

- 1. Wealth.**
People who live in rich countries are typically happier than those in poor ones. This is a strong correlation that remains when other characteristics, such as climate, are the same. Analysis of change over time reveals that economic growth goes together with rising happiness.
- 2. Freedom of Choice.**
People live happier in nations that provide the most opportunities to choose. Economic freedom adds more to happiness in developing nations than in developed ones, but political freedom correlates stronger with happiness in developed nations. People also live happier in individualistic cultures than in collectivistic ones, and tend to have a preference for independence.
- 3. Equality.**
Gender equality has a strong correlation to happiness – more so than income equality. The positive correlation with gender equality is largely derived from a greater opportunity to choose.
- 4. Security.**
There is no correlation between murder rate and average happiness in nations, probably because of the small number of people affected, but there is a strong correlation between corruption and happiness, because it affects a greater share of the population. This relates to the point below.
- 5. Institutional quality.**
People live happier in well-organized societies, where they can count on rule of law and where government organizations function properly. Institutional quality facilitates success in individual lives, as it provides us with a predictable environment in which to safely invest in our future. Institutional quality is also rewarding in itself, like playing a soccer match is more pleasurable when the rules of the game are respected.
- 6. Modernity.**
The more modern the country, the happier are its citizens. Although modernization may

have its own negative side effects, the benefits are clearly greater.

7. **Education.**

Average happiness is higher in the most educated countries where average IQ is also higher. This means that education affects happiness indirectly: intellectual development is required for the functioning of modern society and life in modern society appears to be more satisfying than in traditional societies.

8. **Occupation.**

All over the world, professionals and managers tend to be most satisfied with life. It is not clear as to what extent this

difference results from the rewards of work-tasks, related advantages or differential selection.

9. **Social Participation.**

Happiness tends to be higher among those who work or participate in voluntary activities.

10. **Intimate ties.**

Happiness is consistently related to the presence and quality of intimate networks. Studies all over the world show a positive correlation between happiness and contacts with family and wider kin. Likewise, contacts with friends appear universally to add to happiness.

REFERENCES

Harvard Men's Health Review Volume 22. Number 4. November 2017

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