

WHY AREN'T I HAPPY?

WHY AREN'T I HAPPY?

by

Eugene Roberts.

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

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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.



NEXT MONTH...

Chapter 2. How Happy is Everyone Else?

Part1.

- How to measure happiness.
- How happy are you?
- Money doesn't buy happiness.
- Does age affect happiness?
- Turning points in life.
- Can religion make us happy?

Chapter 2

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.

WHY AREN'T I HAPPY?

- ❑ Community acceptance.
- ❑ 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.

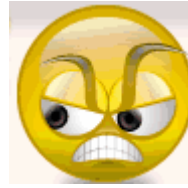
***Duncan Bridgeman & Jamie Catto – “One Giant Leap” Project (CD and DVD) – Festival/Mushroom.**

“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”.

WHY AREN'T I HAPPY?



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?

Part 2.

ARE MARRIED PEOPLE HAPPIER?

The answer to this question is...sometimes yes... and sometimes no.



Why the contradiction? The evidence is quite clear when it comes to couples that have been **fortunate enough to find their soul-mate**, someone with whom they can have a close, enduring, committed relationship. People in such relationships are much more inclined to describe themselves as happy than those who are experiencing numerous, more superficial friendships.

For example, in the United States over the last two decades, **one quarter of never-married adults described themselves as very happy, versus forty percent of married couples**. Surveys in other highly developed western societies showed a similar difference between the happiness ratings of married and non-married individuals.

The qualifying factor here is that those people in **bad marriages** (and suffering harassment or physical or emotional abuse), as well as those separated or divorced, are **often less happy than the never-married**. In fact, **divorced or separated men are eight times more likely to attempt suicide, and twice as likely to have a heart attack as happily married men.**

Some would argue that it is far too simplistic to say “marriage makes us happier”. They counter by pointing out that happy people are socially more attractive, and thus more likely to find a suitable partner and end up in a long-lasting, happy relationship.

Also, married couples usually extend the family unit by having children, which often fills parents with feelings of fulfilment, peacefulness, pride and satisfaction that were not present previously.

Besides, if it is held that marriage will make us happier, **why then are more people in today’s modern world choosing to remain single?**

As we enter a new century, we seem to be witnessing a paradigm shift, away from marriage and the nuclear family. During the 1950’s and 60’s television shows like “The Nelsons”, “The Partridge Family” and “Happy Days” focused on life in the normal happy suburban family.

Today, however, T.V. programs are centred on shows like “Friends” and “Sex in the City”, which focus on the individual rather than the family unit. Census statistics confirm, “*We’re a state of independents...Australians are striking out alone, becoming more independent in their living arrangements and losing their enthusiasm for marriage and religion...a society that is lonelier*” (Mike Steketee, THE AUSTRALIAN, June 18, 2002.)

More individuals than ever before are choosing to remain unmarried and to live alone. They no longer feel the need to conform to the expectations of society. They no longer feel that there is a stigma attached to not getting married and having children, as was the norm in former times.

These individuals are more concerned with achieving self-satisfaction and fulfilment. It remains to be seen how much the gap between married and never-married alters in future years.

The only point that can be made with some certainty is that humans are in the main social animals that more often find happiness in long-term, mutually rewarding relationships.

ARE MEN HAPPIER THAN WOMEN?



The emancipated **woman in today’s modern western world is much less likely to feel that she is discriminated against or deprived than ever before.**

In previous eras it certainly *was* the case that men were seen to hold the reins in matters of social power and business. Today, most of these barriers to women have now been torn down, giving them unbridled access to the same opportunities as men.

The interesting point is that when studies are conducted across today’s industrialised modern nations, gender does not offer a clear indication of personal happiness

This does *not* necessarily mean that we can thus assume that there isn’t much difference. Perhaps it is merely difficult to answer this question because of the inherent differences between men and women.

- ❑ **Men are half as likely to suffer depression, but five times more at risk of succumbing to alcoholism as women.**
- ❑ Women have a greater capacity for empathy, intimacy and social interaction and tend to internalise and dwell more on problems. They are also more likely to open up lines of communication and tell men what they want or need.
- ❑ Conversely, many men pride themselves on being less emotional, more practical, business-like, and more stoic. Often they find it difficult to express their feelings or show their sensitive side.

- ❑ **Over the age of 65 men are four times more likely to commit suicide than women, often because they feel disappointment over the way their lives have turned out, or feel sad and lonely.**

Men *are* happier than women in a number of under-developed, undemocratic countries where women are still subjected to harsh and primitive conditions. Oppressive and pitiless religious, cultural and political practices are still carried out in some parts of the world where women are forbidden from showing their faces in public, from venturing outside the home if unaccompanied, and from seeking an education. Here gender inequality prevents women from endeavouring to rise up to take up their rightful position alongside men.

DOES SEX MAKE US HAPPY?



While sex can undoubtedly intoxicate our senses and send us soaring to the heights of bliss, frequent sex does not always bring happiness.

Sex between two humans can fulfil a desire for intimacy and closeness with a partner and strengthen a loving relationship. It can be more than just a physiological release of sexual tension. However, it is important that couples have reasonably complementary sex drives otherwise problems can arise. Psychologists report counselling women who cannot cope with partners craving sex more than once a day.

While **some researchers have suggested that men can lessen their chances of a stroke by having sex twice or more a week**, others claim that an insatiable sexual appetite indicates a problem.

Some therapists believe that “sex addicts” (who in the past were predominantly men) suffer from a genuine affliction no different to alcohol, gambling and drugs. On the contrary, others believe it to be nothing more than an immature emotional addiction rather than a physical need.

One theory put forth is that “sex addicts” may actually suffer from low self-esteem. They may be trying to neutralize their insecurities by continually seeking reassurance from numerous women that “I am desirable...I am wanted...I feel loved, because all these women let me have sex with them.”

The problem is, an unrelenting pursuit of this kind of reassurance and personal pleasure can often have dire consequences. It may result in broken marriages when the addicted person is caught cheating on a partner. A resulting family break-up has a particularly devastating effect upon the children.

It often also brings great unhappiness and heartbreak to the new sexual conquests that may have been hoping for a more permanent relationship. These victims may be left emotionally scarred as the “Don Juan” quickly tires of the actual sex and moves on to the next chase and the next conquest.

WHY AREN'T I HAPPY?

Interestingly, one survey of sex addicts found that over three quarters of them claimed to have suffered some form of emotional, physical or sexual abuse as children.

Women who are perceived to be oversexed or flirtatious sometimes use their sex as a means of wielding control over others rather than merely seeking to counteract low self-esteem and insecurity. The advent of the popular television show “Sex and the City” seems to herald a new attitude among some of today’s women.

The stars of “Sex and the City” delight in portraying their characters not as promiscuous women, but rather equivalents of the “male stud”. The program highlights a new, tougher feminism where women aren’t seeking connubial bliss in a heterosexual coupling and staying home to bring up babies.

Instead, they are the new breed of female who can hustle with the best of them in the business world, is financially independent, can swear as well as any guy, and can pickup as many men as she desires without feeling at all like a slut. They bounce from one relationship to another giving the impression that a happy relationship is a myth, an elusive dream...and that it is almost impossible to find the right partner and live happily ever after.

The emphasis seems to be on looking great, living independently, wearing expensive clothes and jewellery, driving flash cars and placing career and the pursuit of a good time above all else. Ironically, best selling books and movies are now appearing about women who have devoted their lives to building a career only to find themselves regretting not having had children, and distressed that their biological clocks have almost run out

Thus, sex *can* add to people’s happiness, but it can also bring misery if abused.



Who said that?

“Women need a reason to have sex.
Men just need a place.”

BILLY CRYSTAL.

“Sex is the poor man’s polo.”

CLIFFORD ODETS.

“Sex with groupies is meaningless.

After ten years, I’d had enough.”

OZZY OSBOURNE.

“The difference between sex and love is

that sex relieves tension and love causes it.”

WOODY ALLEN.

“There are a number of mechanical devices

which increase sexual arousal, particularly in women.

Chief among these is the Mercedes-Benz 380SL convertible.”

P.J.O’ROURKE.



HEALTH and HAPPINESS.

It is “a given” for most people that (good) health and happiness go hand-in-hand.

Individuals who are ill are characteristically seen as feeling miserable, sick and far from happy...hence the truisms:

“We don’t know how valuable our health is until we lose it.”

Anon.

“Health and good estate of body are above all gold.”

Apocrypha: Ecclesiasticus xxx.15.

WHY AREN'T I HAPPY?

“In health there is freedom. Health is the first of all liberties.”

Henri-Frederic Amiel, (1821-1881).

Surveys show that **older people are more likely to appreciate and be grateful for their good health, and the contribution it makes to their happiness.**

Younger adults, on the other hand, tend to take their health more for granted, with a resultant weaker correlation between health and happiness in this group.

We cannot change the genetic blueprint we are born with (not yet anyway) and which determines our health. But we *can* do our utmost to stay as healthy as possible through a healthy lifestyle. That means eating properly and exercising regularly.

Eating properly means choosing foods high in complex carbohydrates and low in fat and vitamin supplements if necessary, taken regularly as small meals. Best avoided are stimulants like caffeine, alcohol, tobacco and sugar.

Regular exercise helps strengthen the cardiovascular system and our immune system (which is depressed by a build up of stress chemicals during prolonged stress). More importantly, it provides an outlet for pent-up stress, anger and frustration. Just going for a long brisk walk helps relieve stress (as long as you don't use this moment to obsess on your problems... enjoy the wonders of nature around you instead).

“Happiness is nothing more than good health and a bad memory.”

Albert Schweitzer.



ARE SOME CULTURES HAPPIER THAN OTHERS?

During the last two decades many detailed surveys have been conducted in different countries around the world to find an answer to this question.

The results have come up with an unequivocal answer... **YES!**



In some instances the differences between countries have been quite extreme.

For example, in one study 40% of Dutch people described themselves as being very happy, while only 10% of Portuguese placed themselves in the same category.

Another survey carried out in the nineteen eighties revealed that the Irish population were constantly happier than the more serious, dour Germans, despite having half as much income and buying power as their European neighbours.

The actual reason for the disparate levels of happiness between various cultures is complex and often obscure. It may be postulated that this might be the result of a number of interwoven factors... differentiating factors such as:

- ❑ The wealth of a country.
- ❑ The standard of living and healthcare.
- ❑ Past history (wars, religious conflict, etc).
- ❑ Law and order, and political stability.
- ❑ The prevailing religious beliefs.
- ❑ The values and convictions of the people.
- ❑ The democratic freedom of expression (of political and religious beliefs).
- ❑ Cultural beliefs and customs.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

The United States of America Declaration of Independence. July 4th, 1776.

ARE YOU HAPPY AT WORK?

“We spend the first third of our lives learning, the middle third labouring, and the last third living.”

French proverb.



**“When work is a pleasure, life is joy!
When work is a duty, life is slavery.”**

Maxim Gorky (1868-1936).
Russian novelist.

“When you see what some girls marry,
you realize how they must hate
to work for a living.”

HELEN ROWLAND,

(Reflections of a Bachelor Girl, 1909.)

WHY AREN'T I HAPPY?

Work undoubtedly plays a major role in all our lives and can have an enormous influence on our state of happiness.

The pop duo “America” once sang the lyrics “...the world don't owe me a living” in their song Ventura Highway; and the truth is that most of us *do* have to work for a living to provide for our dependants and ourselves.

Since work plays such an important and inescapable part of our lives, it makes sense to seek out work that is satisfying and rewarding, rather than work that is laborious and soul-destroying.

When a person's work or vocation is stimulating and rewarding, it can provide a true sense of identity as well as adding meaning and purpose to life.



Work is likely to make us happier when it:

- ✓ Engages our skills and talents.
- ✓ Is satisfying and rewarding.
- ✓ Gives us a sense of purpose.
- ✓ Provides a true sense of vocation.
- ✓ Is mentally absorbing.
- ✓ Encourages creativity.
- ✓ Adds a sense of interaction and fellowship with others in the workplace.
- ✓ Allows us to be productive.
- ✓ Lets us feel useful.
- ✓ Makes our output/input important.



Work is likely to make us unhappy when:

- ✘ It is not well suited to our skills.
- ✘ We don't feel adequately rewarded.
- ✘ Is overwhelming or stressful.
- ✘ When you have no empathy with fellow workers.
- ✘ It overtakes other important aspects of our life (e.g. time spent with family).
- ✘ We don't feel appreciated.
- ✘ The work is boring or repetitious.
- ✘ There is no prospect of improvement.

Unfortunately, most of us are not able to choose whether or not we work...it is something we need to do out of necessity and have no control over. However, ***we are able to choose what type of work we do.***

Since work will play such an important part in our lives and exert a profound effect on them, it makes sense to spare absolutely no effort to find the right type of work...work that will not only reward us monetarily so we can nourish our bodies, but satisfying work that will nourish our minds and give us a sense of purpose and satisfaction.

“I have come to a simple philosophy of work. I enjoy what I do and do the best I can. That is enough.”

Maria Schell (Austrian actress).



NEXT MONTH...

Chapter 3. The Traits of Happy People.

- How much is happiness predetermined by our genetics and biochemistry?
- Extroverts are often happier than introverts.
- Some further Traits of happy people.

Chapter 3

The Traits of Happy People.

Happy people often seem to display certain essential characteristics that unhappy individuals do not.

First and foremost, happy people tend to have **high self-esteem**, like themselves, and feel comfortable about who they are. They also generally see themselves as being “nice” people (“nice”...pleasing, agreeable delightful, kind, amiably pleasant... MACQUARIE DICTIONARY), and as being fun to be with.

Happy people tend to be more **optimistic** than unhappy people. In striving to succeed they tend to set their sights higher, and believe more strongly that they can succeed. Should they *not* succeed, they are less likely to blame themselves for failing, and less likely to be discouraged from undertaking new ventures in future.

Thirdly, people who appear to be **in control of their lives** are more inclined to describe themselves as being happy. These are the individuals who have found a balance between the demands of work, relationships, financial pressures, life's adversities, and who still manage to experience and enjoy the wonders of the world around them. Happy people usually do not feel as though they are externally controlled or fear being overwhelmed or demoralised by the vagaries of life.

How much is happiness predetermined by our genetics and biochemistry?



Molecular biologists have not yet discovered a specific “depression gene”; although, there is no doubt that **genetic transmission** is an important factor in determining an individual's state of happiness.

Unfortunately, millions of people *do* find themselves requiring **antidepressant medications** in seeking a return to happiness. Antidepressants such as MAOIs

WHY AREN'T I HAPPY?

(Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitors), TCAs (Tricyclic Antidepressants), SSRIs (Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors), are commonly prescribed to remedy chemical imbalances of certain neurotransmitters, which act as brain messengers.

People suffering from biochemical origins of unhappiness may need the help of psycho-pharmaceutical drugs, **in conjunction with appropriate psychotherapy and counselling**, in order to restore their sense of well-being.

Genetics also determine whether individuals exhibit **Type A or Type B behaviour**.



The **Type A** behaviour pattern is characterised by:

- ❑ a predisposition to **aggressive competitiveness**,
- ❑ a relentless **drive to over-achieve and be “a winner”**,
- ❑ a tendency to be **impatient** and **easily irritated**, and “suffer fools badly”.
- ❑ being **harshly critical** of anyone perceived to get in the way,
- ❑ viewing time spent relaxing as a waste of time,
- ❑ **living life as a competitive event**,
- ❑ being interested only in friendships that will further career or fortune,
- ❑ filling every minute with activity, sometimes at the expense of family and loved ones.

The **Type B** behaviour pattern is characterised by:

- ❑ feeling **self assured** enough not to have to prove one’s worth to others,
- ❑ not taking oneself too seriously...having the ability to laugh at oneself,
- ❑ remaining **calm** and **philosophical** when things don’t turn out as hoped,
- ❑ playing sports for enjoyment and social contact... not solely to be a winner,
- ❑ taking **time out** to indulge in **reading** or listening to **music**,
- ❑ feeling **comfortable in moments of solitude and inactivity**,

WHY AREN'T I HAPPY?

- seeing one's work as merely one part of **what life is all about**,
- seeking friendships from people with no expectation of reward.

However, **family history** is also an extremely important consideration in determining how happy an individual will be.

Researchers have come to understand just how important a person's family is in shaping a view of life's experiences. Studies of twins reared apart have revealed that **the immediate family and cultural influences are largely responsible for shaping a person's attitude and demeanour.**

There is a powerful relationship between patterns of unhappiness in parents and those of their children. If parents are themselves well balanced, happy and enthusiastic, then their children are more likely to be like-wise since they learn most from their parent "role-models".

If parents strive to encourage and praise their children's efforts in a positive manner, then these children are more likely to develop higher self-esteem and confidence than those that are continually harshly criticised and "put down".

**"The greatest gift a parent
can
give a child is enthusiasm."**

Anon.



Extroverts are often happier than introverts.

Studies of identical twins indicate that inherited or genetic factors influence the trait of extroversion that makes some people more outgoing and temperamentally high spirited than others.

When people are **depressed** they tend to **withdraw into themselves** and become more introverted. Conversely, when people are **happy** they tend to get **excited**, and become more **jubilant and outgoing**.

The bad news is that not all of us are born extroverts...some are born serious, shy, dour or miserable rather than high spirited and outgoing. The good news, however, is that we can all do something to change the way we are...even if only slightly.

Research shows that **people actually start to feel happier if they act happier.** Experiments revealed that if people forced the corners of their mouth up into a smile, they soon reported feeling happier and found cartoons funnier than if frowning. **Similarly, if people strode around energetically and “acted” happy, they actually felt a little better than if they shuffled and moped around.**

So... **“Put on a happy Face.”**



Some Further Traits of Happy People:

- ✓ When they see a bumper-sticker saying **“LIFE IS A BITCH, AND THEN YOU DIE.”**...or **“PEOPLE ARE JUST NO DAMN GOOD!”**... happy people most probably laugh, whereas unhappy people sadly nod their head in agreement.
- ✓ **Happy people have more friends, are more likely to get married and stay married, and participate in more social organizations.**
- ✓ Happy people tend to **set themselves realistic, achievable goals**...that way they are less likely to fail and experience bitter disappointment.
- ✓ Happy people are **more energetic and active in pursuing goals**, and are more likely to be hired by an employer and less likely to be fired.
- ✓ They are **willing to move out of their comfort zone** and make changes to their life or its direction. They recognise the truth in the saying... **“If you keep doing things exactly the same way as you did in the past, you’ll keep getting exactly the same results in the future.”**
- ✓ Type B people (who are usually happier than Type A’s) can see a person in the supermarket express checkout exceeding the **“10 Items or Less”** limit and not get furious.
- ✓ Happy drivers can cope when a car cuts in front of them without exploding into a fit of anger that may lead to a confrontation with the other driver and a **“Road Rage”** incident.



- ✓ Happy people realise that **to be a finicky perfectionist** will not only lead to disappointment and frustration, but **will drive you crazy**.
- ✓ Know when to say **“NO!”** if others try to place onerous demands or expectations upon their shoulders.
- ✓ Happy people are **less likely to dwell on sorrows and mistakes** of bygone times, or be prisoners to the past.
- ✓ ...are **less inclined to pessimistic** and feel let down by life or others.
- ✓ ...**don't place undue emphasis on the opinion others** might have of them.
- ✓ ...**don't constantly fret** about everything.
- ✓ ...don't see it as their role **to be all things to all people**, having to look after everybody and everything, and **don't always place other people's needs ahead of their own**.
- ✓ ...don't continually use negative expressions like **“I should have...”**, **“Why didn't I...”**, **“Why does it always have to...”**, **“If only I'd...”**, **“What if...”**
- ✓ ...**don't look for fault in everything** others do, or in what they do themselves.
- ✓ ...do **feel good about who they are and what they do**.
- ✓ ...**manage their lives better** to ensure they get more of what they want out of life.
- ✓ ...are more likely to **see life as a “wondrous adventure”** (Hellen Keller).
- ✓ ...**aren't seduced by the materialistic excesses** of today's western society that promotes **selfishness** (Advertisement... **“The most important person in the world...you!”**), and **hedonism** (a life devoted solely to pursuing pleasure).

- ✓ Happy people know that chasing the **Hollywood mirage of “Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous”**, or **worshipping at the altar of eternal youth** (with the help of Botox injections and the surgeon’s scalpel) is for most merely a chimera, an impossibly wild dream.
- ✓ **Are you too sensitive?** If so, you are more likely to be unhappy. **Oversensitive people often suffered repeated rejection as children rather than receiving unconditional love and acceptance.**

The thoughts of a happy person:

“My life is an unfinished masterpiece.”

Anon.



“I shall despair. There is no creature loves me;
And if I die no soul will pity me:
And wherefore should they,
since that I myself
Find in myself no pity to myself?”

William Shakespeare,
(1564-1616).

Have a



Crappy Day

NEXT MONTH...

Chapter 4. Depression...A Growing Problem.

Part 1.

- Symptoms of depression.

Chapter 4

Depression... A Growing Problem.

Part 1.

Researchers and mental health professionals have recently been startled to discover that the **incidence of depression has increased nearly tenfold in baby boomers.**

Baby boomers, who were born in the years following World War II, were largely instrumental in changing the values and lifestyles of Western society during the 1960's and 70's. The **rate of change** in those decades continued to **escalate throughout the 1980's and 90's, bringing with it rapid and dramatic social changes.**

The first half of the twentieth century was characterised by a more structured society, with distinct social strata and ingrained conservative values and customs.

People dressed conservatively and more uniformly; individuality was seen as being eccentric behaviour; work choices were more limited but often promised a vocation to last a lifetime, with **greater job security; life was centred on the family**, and the immediate suburb or town, and people knew who their neighbours were. **Life was simpler, but less complicated.**

Enter the "rockers" and "jazzers" of the 1950's, with the emergence of "the king" Elvis Presely and "the wild one" Marlon Brando. Conservative society was taken aback by the brash behaviour of the teenagers of the day. Church leaders decried their lack of inhibition and unruly behaviour, citing their music and dancing to be a corrupting influence.

The "Singing Sixties" continued the trend with the Beatles spearheading change and opening up the world of the younger generation. The introduction of the birth control pill allowed the "swinging generation" to break out and seek sexual freedom that led to the "love-ins" of the "hippy" generation.

Soon, some of the younger generation were experimenting with "free love", way-out fashions, nightclubs with loud bands and dim lights, and alcohol with the occasional marijuana joint or "acid trip" thrown in. In broad terms, it was a time of **"busting loose" from the constraints and inhibitions of the previous generation, and breaking down old taboos and traditions.**

WHY AREN'T I HAPPY?

It was a time when **individuality flourished**; when the older generation despaired at the era of “sex, drugs, and rock ’n’ roll”. This generation of baby boomers revelled in their **newfound freedoms, which opened up a more exciting world with vastly broader challenges and opportunities.**

Technological breakthroughs in the latter part of the twentieth century soon made it cheaper and quicker for people to travel, sparking a mass movement of tourists around the globe. Satellites beamed images into lounge-room television sets from around the world; the Internet allowed instant information and communication transfer around the planet; big business began a frantic stampede towards consumerism and “globalisation” ... the “**global village**” had arrived.



Unfortunately, along with all the benefits of this new society, came new pressures and uncertainties. **Globalisation ushered in rapid change and competition that forced many businesses to ruthlessly reassess their costs and methods in order to survive and compete.**

Bob Dylan’s words “*the times they are a changing*” were prophetic, and employees now found themselves having to change rapidly with them. Gone were the days where a worker was assured of a job security. Instead, workers found themselves faced with having to constantly re-train to keep up with quickly changing technologies, or risk being left behind. Permanent employees were replaced with casual workers who could more easily be retrenched...the result was increased uncertainty.

The much-heralded “**New Era Economy**” and “**Information Age**” of the 1990’s, with its marvellous advances in computers and the Internet, and all the associated hi-technology new inventions and gadgets, had **promised an easier lifestyle with more leisure time.**

Instead, **workers found themselves working harder than ever** and often in part-time, lesser-paid jobs. **Many were now peddling faster than before just trying to keep up, and feeling the added pressure of having to adapt to a constantly changing environment.**

At the same time, the pervasive influence of powerful advertising and marketing media was exposing consumers to messages that were shaping their perceptions of themselves and their lives...perceptions that in many cases were to lead to frustration and disappointment.

The popular culture of the today has become one dominated by advertising which promises that buying the right goods or services “will make you feel good”...having the right looks, clothes and car will make you sexually attractive...living in a grand

house and carrying expensive designer luggage will bring you attention and admiration... acquire all these “things” and you’ll be happy.

Billboards, television ads and magazines constantly display the smiling faces of “drop dead gorgeous” models, leaving many consumers to come to the sad realisation that they actually compare quite poorly to that perfect image. Meanwhile, others rush off frantically to try and transform themselves through plastic surgery and “whatever it takes” in an effort to become “what they ain’t”.

Many people find themselves unable to live up to these standards, and are unhappy to find that their real world is at odds with the one that the consumerist dream world tells them they need to live in to be happy. This can have a harmful affect on self-esteem, and lead to increased anxiety and depression.

Add in the fact that the nuclear family and local network of supportive neighbours has been largely replaced by more individuals who have moved away and are living alone... and suddenly it becomes clear that the rapid changes to society over recent decades have come at a price.

And that price appears to be a rising incidence of depression.

“Times change, and we change with them.”

Anon.

(In Harrison, *Description of Britain*, 1577).

SYMPTOMS of DEPRESSION.



Some of the symptoms that might be felt or displayed by individuals are set out below:

- nothing seems important,**
- feeling out of control or **helpless,**
- reduced** pleasure or **interest** in most **everyday activities,**
- reduced** libido (sex drive)
- always **feeling down or gloomy,**
- insomnia,** or the inability to fall asleep,

WHY AREN'T I HAPPY?

- ❑ disturbed sleep patterns with nightmares,
- ❑ hard to get out of bed in the morning,
- ❑ nervous habits like **teeth-grinding**, finger tapping, leg twitching, darting eye movements, or acting **jittery**,
- ❑ fear and **reoccurring thoughts of death**,
- ❑ a **loss of sense of humour**,
- ❑ finding it **hard to concentrate** or make decisions & easily distracted from tasks,
- ❑ suffering from **low energy levels**,
- ❑ easy to provoke into **emotional outbursts**,
- ❑ **easily** startled or **irritated**,
- ❑ **easily upset by criticism**,



- ❑ **easily discouraged**,
- ❑ **increased consumption of coffee, alcohol, sedatives, tranquillizers, food, cigarettes, or sleeping pills**,
- ❑ tending to **withdraw from social contact** with other people,
- ❑ having **frightening panic attacks (one in ten adults have them)**,
- ❑ experiencing **dryness of mouth or excessive desire to urinate**,
- ❑ suffering **heart palpitations, shortness of breath, or clammy sweats**,
- ❑ **loss of appetite**,
- ❑ **stomach upsets, irritable bowel, constipation or nausea**,
- ❑ **feeling persecuted** or hard done by,



WHY AREN'T I HAPPY?

- ❑ **feeling sad and alone,**
- ❑ **spontaneously crying,**
- ❑ **feeling empty** or hollow.



No doubt other symptoms could be added to this list. However, the point should be clear by now...anyone afflicted with too many of these ailments is certain to be feeling lousy and unhappy.

Which brings us to the next segment... **what to do to remedy the situation?**



NEXT MONTH...

Chapter 4. Depression...A Growing Problem.

Part 2.

- **SEEKING HELP for DEPRESSION.**

Part 2.

SEEKING HELP for DEPRESSION.



People who are suffering from depression are most likely to visit their family doctor first, rather than a mental health professional. Much of the time these individuals may not even consider that they are depressed, and may be surprised by that diagnosis. Often, they may present with vague symptoms believing they have some physical illness that is making them feel “out of sorts” or unable to cope with everyday life.



Some researchers believe that **general practitioners correctly diagnose only around half of these cases.** Unfortunately, some doctors fail to recognise or treat these individuals looking instead for physical disorders, while others may lack the experience or take the time to investigate this often-complex problem. **Statistics also suggest that only one in four people suffering from depression end up consulting or being referred to a mental health professional or therapist.**

When help *is* finally sought and a diagnosis of depression arrived at, treatment often begins with the prescription of antidepressant medications.

Many medical practitioners are unreservedly enthusiastic in prescribing psycho pharmaceutical drugs to help relieve the distress of depression. The range of drugs used to reduce the symptoms of depression include the long used tricyclic antidepressants (TCA), monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOI), the selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRI), as well as the more recently released Prozac.

The magnitude of the problem becomes clear when it is realised that some researchers predict that **up to one in four women, and one in ten men, may suffer depression during their lifetimes.**

A survey in the United States in the mid 1990's came up with the startling conclusion that the annual cost of depression...taking into account days lost from work, accidents on the job, faulty work needing to be redone, as well as the actual cost of medications and psychotherapy... amounted to well over fifty billion dollars!

DRUGS ALONE are NOT the ANSWER.



Most mental health professionals are quick to point out that depression is rarely just a matter of genetics, or of correcting chemical imbalances of neurotransmitters (like serotonin in the left prefrontal cortex).

Psycho pharmaceutical drugs may be helpful if used for periods of up to six or nine months to reduce symptoms. However, these same drugs do sometimes have unwanted side effects, and patients cannot usually stay on them forever.

The successful treatment of depression often relies on drugs being used in conjunction with psychotherapy. **Psychotherapy plays an essential role in helping many patients come to terms with internal psychological and external sociological problems that are often the root cause of their depressed state.**

Without the appropriate counselling and support, many patients are doomed to eventually slide back into their big black hole of despair.

Psychotherapy can help people to avoid regression by assisting them to better understand themselves, teaching vital problem solving skills, showing how to cope with life's problems, and helping individuals to develop skills in resolving personal and interpersonal issues. It can tell them how to regain control over their lives, and what to do to feel better.

Some Facts about Depression:

- ❖ The World Health Organization predicts that **by 2020 depression will be the world's second largest cause of disease and disability.**
- ❖ **We live thirty years longer** and are **five times wealthier** than our ancestors one hundred years ago, but **we are no happier.**
- ❖ In modern Western society up **to one in eight men and one in four women will suffer depression at some stage in their lives** (with some estimates even higher).

WHY AREN'T I HAPPY?

- ❖ Of the 2,400 Australians who committed **suicide** in 1999 (from a population of twenty million), **88 per cent** are estimated to have had **a depressive disorder** at the time of their death.
- ❖ **Anti-depressant drug use skyrocketed** more than 250 per cent in Australia from 1992 to 1999, to one in thirty Australians.
- ❖ Researchers found **anxiety most prevalent in women aged forty-five to fifty-four.**
- ❖ **Electro-convulsive therapy (ECT)**, which involves passing a 75-150 volt electric current through the brain of a restrained patient, is still used in serious cases at high risk of committing suicide (despite claims it is barbaric and can cause memory loss).
- ❖ **Eighty per cent of people with depression suffer anxiety or panic attacks** (Australian Bureau of Statistics).
- ❖ Suicide prevention groups believe that up to **ninety per cent of suicide victims give warning signs of their intentions.**
- ❖ **Ten to fifteen per cent of women suffer a major post-natal depression** soon after giving birth.
- ❖ University of Maryland researchers discovered that **healthy people were sixty per cent more likely to laugh than those suffering from heart disease,** which were more solemn, even angry.
- ❖ Harvard researchers found **optimists were half as likely to develop heart disease as pessimists.**
- ❖ **People experiencing serious depression were three times more at risk of dying from heart disease than those with a happier outlook.** One reason may be that depressed individuals are less likely to eat properly or bother exercising.
- ❖ **Bisexual people suffer more mental health problems than homosexuals or heterosexuals** (*British Journal of Psychiatry*). It seems that not having a clear sexual orientation one way or the other, as well as the resulting social pressures, is a major cause of stress.
- ❖ A study conducted by Griffith University (Gold Coast, Australia) found that as many as **one in five people at sometime thought life was not worth living, and one in ten had contemplated suicide.**



The Inkblot Test

...was devised in 1918 by Swiss psychiatrist Hermann Rorschach.

Rorschach produced a series of ten inkblots, which he would show to patients undergoing psychoanalysis. Patients were asked to study each inkblot in turn, and then asked the questions...

... "Describe what you see?"

... "What do they remind you of?"

The theory behind the test was that their subjective answers would help trained observers to identify patients' emotional characteristics and personality traits.

It was hoped to delve into the inner workings of the mind and psyche by watching to see if the patient reacted by becoming angry, hostile, apologetic, timid or anxious and by what was "seen" in each inkblot.

This test is widely used clinically although its reliability is often questioned.

"Most of us miss out on life's big prizes... the Pulitzer, the Nobel Prize, the Oscar, the Tony, and the Emmy.

But we're all eligible for life's small pleasures; a pat on the back, a kiss behind the ear, a full moon, an empty parking space, a crackling fire, a great novel, a glorious sunset, a hot soup, a cold beer.

Don't fret about copping life's grand awards. Enjoy its tiny delights. There are plenty of them."

Anon.

§

A humorous take on the Inkblot Test:

Psychiatrist (to patient): “What do you see when I hold up this picture?”

Patient (thinks for a second, then answers): “Sex.”

Psychiatrist (holding up next inkblot pic): “...and this one?”

Patient: “Sex.”

Psychiatrist (getting exasperated): “...and this one?”

Patient: “Sex.”

Psychiatrist: “You’ve got a sick mind! All you think about is sex!”

Patient: “ME sick? You’re the one holding up all the filthy pictures!”

NEXT MONTH...

Chapter 5. Steps to a Happier Life.

Part 1.

- **Have a personal vision.**
- **Improve your self esteem.**
- **Have a positive mental attitude.**
- **Build bridges with your family.**
- **Cultivate a network of friends.**
- **Dare to dream.**

Chapter 5

Steps to a Happier Life.



Part 1.

Abraham Lincoln is credited with saying... **“Most people are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.”**

With those words ringing in their ears, the challenge for unhappy people is to make changes in their life that will help them to become happier.

Each person has to take time-out and ask themselves a few questions:

- ▮ Am I seeing life’s “big picture”?
- ▮ What do I want out of life?
- ▮ Am I satisfied with the direction my life is taking me?
- ▮ If I’m not, how do I *change* direction?
- ▮ How can I realise my full potential?
- ▮ What areas of my life are unfulfilling? Is it my work...my interpersonal relationships...my social life...my spirituality...or something else?

Once I’ve identified aspects of my life that I am unhappy with, do I have the knowledge and the courage and determination to change them?

Once the right questions have been asked, then the next step is to find the right answers. The final pages of this book are devoted to some suggestions as to where those answers may be found.



1. Have a Personal Vision.

Unless we know what we want to achieve and get out of life we cannot expect to find fulfilment. **Setting goals in life is an important step towards attaining that fulfilment.**

A popular proverb tells us ... *“If we don’t have a specific goal or destination in mind, then any road in life will take us there.”* Without goals, the chances of our getting the most out of life are greatly reduced if we drift along aimlessly hoping for good luck to play a hand or the “Fickle Finger of Fate” to point us in the right direction.

Instead, we need to **set realistic goals in life**... goals that are possible and worthwhile. Motivators would have us believe that *“anything is possible, and “where there’s a will, there’s a way”*... all it takes is determination and the *“will to succeed”*. To believe this mantra uncritically may lead to disappointment.

A **strong motivation may not in itself be enough to reach our goals.** Also necessary is the need to **be objective about what is realistically possible,** what steps or strategy must be taken, which skills acquired, and what risks are involved.

There are no guarantees in life... therefore we should invest our time and talents wisely.



2. Improve your Self Esteem.

Some suggestions:

- **Don't "beat up on yourself" when you make a mistake...after all, you're only human.**
- **Don't always seek the approval of others...it undermines your self-esteem.**
- **Don't play down your many successes and dwell excessively on the few failures.**
- **Boost your self-image by telling yourself mentally... "*I am an O.K. person... I deserve to be rewarded and loved for who I am... there are many things that I do well and can be proud of.*"**
- **Believe in yourself.** Build your confidence by saying regularly to yourself "*I can reach my goals*"... "*I accept myself as I am, unconditionally...warts and all.*"
- **Learn to assert yourself and to express your feelings. Learn to say "NO!"**
- **Set your own benchmarks of success.**

**"How can you expect others to like you
if you don't like yourself?"**



3. Have a Positive Mental Attitude.

Tell yourself:

- ✓ ***I can* make my mark in this world.**
- ✓ ***I won't* be intimidated by the thought of failure.**

WHY AREN'T I HAPPY?

- ✓ ***I am* a worthwhile, lovable person.**
- ✓ ***I can* find love and companionship.**
- ✓ ***I can* achieve a satisfying and meaningful career.**
- ✓ ***I can* find happiness in this life.**
- ✓ ***I can* attract friends.**
- ✓ **If I show determination *I will* eventually succeed.**
- ✓ ***I will* ensure my life has meaning and purpose.**



4. Build Bridges with your Family.

**“You can pick and choose your friends,
but not your family.” Anon.**

None but a mule denies his family.

Arabic proverb.

After all is said and done, **our immediate family are the people in whom we should most be able to confide in and seek support from in times of need, be it emotional support or material.**

“All happy families resemble one another, but every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.”

Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910).



5. Cultivate a Network of Friends.

People who do not have a network of close friends around them...friends in whom they can trust, confide and call upon in times of need, as well as share the good times... can **develop new friends by expanding their social contacts.**

In some circumstances it may be necessary to first make a conscious decision to **“cut loose”** certain existing **friendships that may be unhealthy, or causing stress and unhappiness.**

New friendships can be developed by increasing one’s social contacts in places like social clubs, dances, hobby groups, sporting clubs, art classes, evening classes, even the work place... anywhere that people with similar interests and values to yours are to be found.

This will involve making an effort and reaching out to others, and may lead to moments of vulnerability and fears of rejection or imposing on others... but do it... the risk is worth it!

“There are plenty of acquaintances in this world... but very few real friends.”

Chinese Proverb.



6. Dare to Dream.

“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn’t do than by the ones you did. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbour. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream.”

MARK TWAIN (1835-1910).
(SAMUEL LANGHORNE CLEMENS).

“Unless a dream is turned into a goal and acted upon, it will always remain only a dream.”

Eugene Roberts.

NEXT MONTH...

Chapter 5. Steps to a Happier Life.

Part 2.

- Minimize workplace stress.
- Change with the times.
- Take timeout for fun & relaxation.
- Keep fit and healthy.
- Nurture your spirituality.

Part 2.

7. Minimise Workplace Stress.



The arrival of the computer driven information-age and the much-heralded “New Era” economy of the 1990’s promised society a better lifestyle with more leisure time. Instead, globalisation and the incessant drive for increased productivity are now being blamed for increased workplace stress and employees working harder than ever. Unfortunately, **stress is an inescapable part of life**...and more so today than ever.

Some Causes of Workplace Blues:

- ❑ New computer-age technologies have brought **more intense job demands often associated with longer hours.**
- ❑ Stress resulting from a **mismatch between the effort workers put in and the rewards they receive** (both monetary and in self-esteem).
- ❑ Worker **resentment at being deprived of quality time with family.**
- ❑ The constant **pressure to upgrade skills.**
- ❑ Increased **job burnout,** desk rage and bullying.
- ❑ **Lack of job security due to bouts of corporate cost cutting and restructuring, and volatility in financial markets.**
- ❑ Bottom-rung workers suffer more health problems and stress than executives due to feeling a **“lack of control”** in their lives.
- ❑ Some workers thrive in these demanding, intense conditions...others succumb.

- **Older workers, not yet ready to retire, or who have not built up a big enough retirement “nest egg”, feel threatened by upcoming, savvier young workers.**

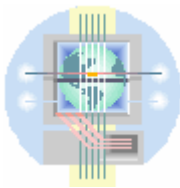
Some firms provide stress management programs and counselling to help struggling workers to cope with workplace stress. Otherwise, workers scramble as best they can to adapt in unpredictable times. One alternative... change jobs!



8. Change with the Times.

“The industrial landscape is already littered with remains of once successful companies that could not adapt their strategic vision to altered conditions of competition.”

Abernathy.



“It’s hard for me to get used to these changing times. I remember when air was clean and sex was dirty.”

GEORGE BURNS.

**“Change is the law of life,
and those who look only to the past or present
are certain to miss the future.”**

John Fitzgerald Kennedy.



**“Only I can change my life.
No one can do it for me.”**

Carol Burnett.

*“It is the
most unhappy people
who most fear change.”*

Mignon McLaughlin.

9. Take Timeout for Fun & Relaxation.

How many times have we heard the expressions “**life is a journey, not a destination**”, and “**make sure to stop and smell the flowers along the way**”?

The trouble is, many of us get so swept up in the hurly burly of modern day life that all too often we forget to take time-out and actually do it. Sometimes we need to stop and make sure we occasionally escape from the daily grind and make time to do the things that make us happy and give us pleasure.

Make sure you’ve always got something to look forward to...that next ski trip, a weekend away camping, playing golf or tennis, the adventure of white-water rafting... whatever turns you on. **The late John Lennon expressed it very succinctly in his song “Beautiful Boy”:**

“...Life is what happens to you while you’re busy making other plans”.



10. Keep Fit and Healthy.

Genetic inheritance is believed to determine about one quarter of our natural life span probability. The rest is largely determined by our lifestyle. When we are out of shape we often feel “out of sorts” and find it harder to handle life’s stresses and more difficult to bounce back from life’s knocks.

Keeping yourself in the good physical shape helps you to cope in life. A healthy lifestyle, backed up with regular exercise or sporting activities can act as a temporary **circuit breaker to switch off stress.**

Stress tends to feed off itself. When the mind begins to constantly focus inwardly it can begin to reinforce negative messages... messages which are often incorrect but which still become self-fulfilling. If left unchecked, these negative thoughts can spiral out of control and develop into destructive “mind race”. **Resorting to excessive consumption of coffee, alcohol, cigarettes or food is not the best way to tackle the problem.**

Strenuous, and preferably enjoyable, exercise is a far better way to temporarily block out our problems, clear the mind and help us bounce back.

11. Nurture your Spirituality.

Psychologists have found that **people who have a strong sense of purpose and meaning in their lives are happier than those that do not.**

For some individuals that sense of purpose manifests itself in their faith in a Supreme Being or creator, which instils in them a sense of security and well-being. Some take comfort from their trust in a Divine Plan, believing that “everything happens for a reason” and that they were “put here on earth for a reason”.

Their faith allows them to accept all the injustices, wars and turmoil of this world in the belief that ultimately their God will ensure that the wicked are punished and the righteous and persecuted will get their just reward. They also **find succour in being able to reach out to God in times of need for help through the power of prayer.**

Those who do not believe there is a Divine Power behind the Universe must then rely solely upon themselves, to solve their own problems and to find inner peace by any means available.



NEXT MONTH...

Chapter 5. Steps to a Happier Life.

Part 3.

- **The reality of Reality T.V.**
- **The cult of youth.**
- **The lure of consumerism.**

Part 3.

12. The Reality of Reality T.V.



The world-wide phenomenon of **Reality Television** first appeared in the 1990's and promised to reveal "real life" through the camera lens... "**real life people in real life situations**".

The attraction of this **new genre of T.V. program** is that people can sit in the comfort of their living room night after night looking in on (some would say spying on) other people in various "real life situations". Shows like "Shafted", "The Weakest Link", "Who Wants to be a Millionaire", "Popstars"; and others like "Big Brother", "Temptation Island", "Survivor" and "The Mole", where the cameras are supposedly kept hidden from participants so we see them "**acting naturally**" (...isn't that what they call an **oxymoron?**).

Contestants are seduced by the temptation of winning big cash prizes, the opportunity to be "discovered" and launched into a showbiz career, or by the craving to be a celebrity for a short while... to do "whatever it takes" to achieve that "fifteen minutes of fame".



Psychologists now believe that these types of programs may harbour a darker side, and may actually be fostering unhealthy values and unhappiness. They fear the programs are pandering to the baser instincts in humans and promoting vices such as greed, scheming, dishonesty, selfishness, nastiness, and egotism rather than the more noble virtues like decency.

“**Temptation Island**” takes couples that are held up as being faithful to each other, and puts them in romantic situations where they are seduced by scantily-clad voluptuous women, or handsome men, **to see if their fidelity can be destroyed...** in other words, **to see if they can be made to betray their partners.**

“Shafted” relies on contestants “shafting” (i.e. stabbing in the back) other contestants in order to win the money... and so on.

Unfortunately, it would appear that this format of program, while undoubtedly entertaining to some, and cheaper to produce, is **actually likely to make some people unhappier.** It does so **by fostering unrealistic expectations in viewers about what they really need to be happy, and by promoting undesirable values that bring out the worst in people, and so are more likely to lead to greater unhappiness.**

13. The Cult of Youth.



“To know how to grow old is the Master-work of wisdom, and one of the most difficult chapters in the great art of living.”

Henri Frederic Amiel (1821-1881).

It seems “to know how to grow old” has become infinitely more difficult with the dawning of the twenty-first century.

People living in the modern western world are today constantly bombarded with images of “**drop dead gorgeous guys and gals**” flashing whiter-than-white smiles and flaunting flawless faces and bodies. **There is an apparent phobia about growing old in a society that seems to worship more and more at the altar of youth and not to value as highly the wisdom and experience of the “grey-haired generation”.**

Testament to this trend is the enormous sums of money and vast medical expertise being spent on plastic surgery in **an effort to hold back the ravages of time.** Face lifts, butt lifts, breast implants, liposuction, nose jobs... you name it, and it’s all being done by a growing legion of slaves to youth.

Since the times of the Egyptian Pharaohs the quest for **the elusive Elixir of Eternal Youth** has beckoned. Our ancestors were known to have indulged in many rituals in an attempt to hold back the hands of time...from bathing in goat's milk or the blood of virgins, to drinking urine and eating monkey glands.



Now, **“Botox” parties are all the rage**, where women and men get together to have this potentially deadly toxin injected into their faces over a cocktail, to paralyse muscles so they no longer contract and cause skin to wrinkle. One movie director complained that this procedure was now so common that many actors had frozen, less expressive faces, while more females featured the “trout mouth” produced by collagen injections into the lips.

In some cases this fear of looking old is understandable. **One survey carried out by a recruitment company found that over forty per cent of older workers had encountered age-related discrimination in the workplace that often impeded their chances of getting a job.** Little wonder that workers in this position are tempted to dye the grey away, start taking growth hormone supplements, or have a little “nip and tuck”.

Unfortunately, today's younger generation (even teenagers) are also flocking to enhance their appearance, often for no better reason than to copy the look of some super model, movie star, or pop idol. **Today's modern society seems to place an inordinate importance on “face value”, sometimes at the expense of other more worthwhile qualities.**



Savvy advertising executives take advantage of the pop culture, which the youth generation consumes so greedily, and **target the youth of today**, especially young girls. **The marketing pitch is appealing...if you have the right look, wear the right labels and makeup, and have lots of “attitude”...you can have it all...money, fame, and do whatever you want. No need for nerdy education or settling for an ordinary McJob. No having to compromise and make choices.**

The **sad reality** is that very few of today's youth will achieve fame and fortune in glamorous careers. Instead, **many wannabes pay a high emotional cost when their unreal expectations are cruelly dashed and they have to settle for “ordinary” jobs and lives after all.**



WHY AREN'T I HAPPY?

Studies published in the Medical Journal of Australia reveal **that women who have recently divorced or separated are more likely to undergo plastic surgery**, and that **women who undergo cosmetic surgery are more inclined to suffer anxiety, chronic illness and sleep disorders**. Researchers also suggest that some medical practitioners are **exploiting the low self-esteem of patients** by reinforcing the view that ageing is an undesirable quality, in order to promote their highly profitable businesses. **This type of morality has turned vanity from a being a vice into a virtue, and ageing into a disease!**

Not only does this seem to be an obscene abuse of wealth and privilege by the First World, while the Third World struggles with poverty and disease. It also flies in the face of the notion that we should **“grow old gracefully”**, and increases the likelihood that the **increasing pressures to not show our age** will lead to increasing unhappiness and insecurities in many people.

**“I still think of myself as I was 25 years ago.
Then I look in a mirror and see an old bastard
... and realise it's me.”**

Dave Allen.

(The Independent, 1993).



14. The Lure of Consumerism.



The culture of today seems to be dominated by advertisements that promise that if you buy *this* product or make use of *that* service you will ... feel better, be happier, look sexier, out-do your rivals, drive faster, be one cut above everyone else, dress sharper, look more successful, etc, etc, etc.

Advertising's constant message seems to be that to reach a state of happiness we have to consume more and more, and forever strive for better than we've got. People caught up in this **consumerist dream world** are trying to live the dream, only to find that all too often such promises are hollow. In fact, **researchers tell us that the more materialistic people become, the unhappier they become.**

Instead of making individuals happier, "retail therapy" (i.e. going shopping to feel better) and trying to "keep up with the Joneses" are more likely to lead to greater frustration. People who depend on possessions to define their place in society and their sense of worth, rather than relationships with key intimate people, are less likely to be happy.

The power of advertising is awesome. It has become the new opiate of the masses. It has the power to convince shoppers that they "can't live without" a product; that "the most important person in the world (is) ...**you**"; of course "you deserve it".

It has the power to make people scramble to purchase luxury items (which produce ludicrous profit margins for large corporations). **Luxury brands** usually cost a little more to produce, but not *that* much more. Relying on the fact that they are a symbol of exclusivity and that there are not enough to go around, they sell themselves as **symbols of success, power and independence**. A funny thing happens when supplies of a luxury brand item increase...suddenly it doesn't seem so luxurious or desirable any more.

So, what's the answer? Perhaps it is time to step back from the consumer-led "Me" generation. Perhaps it is time to move away from the selfishness, frustration and anger that seem to prevail today; back to a standard of decency, common courtesy and respect.

The irony is, that **although the First World is wallowing in luxury, its people appear to be no happier.** However, if some of that wealth were directed to the **oppressed, ill, illiterate, poverty-stricken and hungry people of the Third World...the barometer of happiness on this planet would surely go through the roof!**

**“The secret of contentment is
the realization that life is a gift,
not a right.”**

Anon.



Good Bye, and Good Luck...

Eugene Roberts.