



CONNECTIONS

A NEWSLETTER ABOUT FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS & PERSONAL GROWTH

10 skills that can increase your happiness

Source: Fordyce, 1997

1 Be active and stay busy It appears that happy people are always involved in something. They put energy into life and take healthy risks by trying out new things and getting involved.

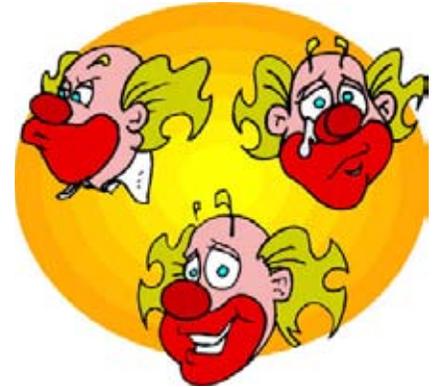
2 Social Interaction Happier people have been shown to spend more time with people they want to be around. The more you can spend with family, friends, and peers, the more likely you will find more purpose in life.

3 Meaningful Work Research suggests that people that are happier invest more energy into activities that they believe in. Wise career choices seem to have an impact on happiness.

4 Organization Happy people are able to maximize their time by organizing their lives. They are able to put energy into areas that are important while getting rid of activities that are not useful. In addition, they plan ahead with happiness and meaning in mind.

5 Stop Worrying Research indicates that 90% of worries do not come true. Happy people are able to accept the things they cannot change and stop worrying about uncontrollable factors in their life.

6 Avoid Perfectionism It appears those with idealistic, high expectations are less satisfied with life compared to those with realistic expectations. Furthermore, those that gain happiness through achievement only will likely have a roller-coaster of emotions throughout life and never be able to reach the grass that is greener on the other side.



The Origin of Sincerity

Sincerity is one of the traits that seems to be related to the potential one has to be happy. The origin of the word sincerity offers insight about this important characteristic. It appears that there is a debate about the origin with two different possible roots; however, both stories can shed more understanding about the word which may help a person to understand how one becomes more sincere. The most common belief is that the word comes from two words "sin" and "cera" which means "without" and "wax."

Reportedly, during the times of Romans, sculptors would often use wax to cover up the cracks that would sometimes occur when they



10 Skills That Can Increase...

(continued from page 1)

7 Positive Thinking We are what we think seems to be true. Research has found that thoughts influence emotions, physical health, addictions, biology, coping skills, stress levels, mental health, etc. We literally mold who we are to ourselves and others through our thoughts.

8 Past, Present, Future Being able to learn from the past rather than live in the past as well as planning for the future rather than living in the future (i.e., I will be happy when...), helps one keep the present in perspective.

9 Sincerity Being honest with yourself and others helps one avoid carrying baggage over time.

10 Love Close, emotionally intimate relationships appear to magnify one's potential for happiness. Learning to build and maintain such relationships will be important to build and maintain happiness.

Research on Happiness

An interesting website explaining the history of happiness research can be found at <http://www.gethappy.net>. It appears that happiness research took a long time to really be taken seriously. Fordyce (2000) believes that one of the main reasons it took some time to study happiness is that psychology in general has primarily focused on the negative. Only recently have professionals begun to realize that learning how to have a healthy, positive life may help us understand how to avoid an unhealthy or negative life.

There are a number of interesting findings related to happiness. First, Easterlin (2001) points out that those with above average incomes tend to be happier; however, their happiness does not increase as their income increases. Thus, it appears that once a person reaches a certain level that is a little over average, their happiness level will not change in regards to income. It is interesting to note that people in the studies feel that their happiness has increased over time as they get richer; however, studies indicate that actual differences are small.

Another factor related to happiness is marital status. It appears that those that are married tend to be happier overall than those that are unmarried or cohabitating (Stack &

The Origin...

(continued from page 1)

made a mistake to a marble column or statue. Rather than starting over, they would cover up the crack with wax and sell the product as if it was a whole, unblemished piece. When buyers began to notice the blemishes after the wax melted, they would begin to ask for pieces that were "sincere" or that were "without wax."

Other literary analysts believe that the word stems from the root words "sin" and "crescare" which means "oneness of growth." This was used to indicate plants that came from pure stock rather than hybrid plants.

Both origins point out the importance of being your true self. In other words, you present yourself as one "without wax" letting all of your strengths and blemishes show forth rather than pretending to be someone that you are not. Equally, it suggests that one should present their purest form rather than present a hybrid in which you say what others want to hear or want you to be. Being sincere helps one have a higher potential to be happy because one begins to give value to their true self. As they give value, they are able to progress in a unique, pure manner and truly maximize their true self.



Research on Happiness

(continued from page 2)

Eshelman, 1998). Researchers believe that this is due partially to the fact that financial stress is reduced when one is married as there is more financial stability regarding expectations and earners in the household. In addition, it appears that those that are married are able to meet physical health demands better as well. More research is needed to understand other factors relating to why married couples are happier. Many theorists believe that married couples are happier because there is a stronger sense of commitment and emotional stability.

Fordyce (2000) summarizes some of the other research findings including the following: 1) Gender makes no difference in levels of happiness; 2) Marital status does improve happiness potential only when the relationship is going well; if it is going badly, it has a strong negative influence on happiness levels; 3) Having children or number of children does not seem to make a significant difference according to studies; 4) Satisfaction with job correlates with happiness levels; 5) Higher education influences level of happiness with a 4-year college degree or more increasing levels of happiness; 6) Intelligence level seems to have no influence on happiness; 7) Good physical health does not increase happiness, but bad physical health will definitely decrease it; and 8) Age itself does not influence happiness; however, certain events that often occur during certain ages can influence happiness. Early adulthood to middle adulthood seems to be the happiest times with adolescence and old age being the most common unhappy times.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT...



References

Easterlin, R. A. (2001). Income and happiness: Towards a unified theory. *The Economic Journal*, 111, 465-484.

Fordyce, M. W. (1997). Educating for happiness. *Quebec Review of Psychology*, (English translation).

Fordyce, M. W. (2000). Human happiness: Its nature and its attainments. Retrieved from the world wide web on August 5, 2006 at <http://www.gethappy.net/freebook.htm>.

Stack, S. & Eshelman, J. R. (1998). Marital status and happiness: A 17-nation study. *Journal of Marriage & Family*, 60(2), 527-536.

(This issue based on a document from www.myfamilysolutions.com written by W. Jared DuPree, MS)

Prepared for K-State Research and Extension by:
Charlotte Shoup Olsen, Ph.D.
Extension Specialist, Family Systems &
W. Jared DuPree, M.S.

Kansas State University is committed to making its services, activities and programs accessible to all participants. If you have special requirements due to a physical, vision, or hearing disability, contact Clyde Howard, Director of Affirmative Action, Kansas State University, (TTY) 785-532-4807.

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, amended. Kansas State University, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and United State Department of Agriculture Cooperating, Fred A. Cholick, Director.