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Happiness: The *science behind your smile*: by Daniel Nettle Book Review

*“The organism has one basic tendency and striving to actualize, maintain, and enhance the experiencing organism” (Carl Rogers).*

As individuals with free will we are programmed to find happiness, it is deeply imbedded within our human nature to have these sets of beliefs about the kinds of things that will bring us happiness and the potential to pursue them. Just like Darwin's theory of Evolution, where only the strongest species survive, those who endured environmental factors and risks, adapted, despite the consequences and ultimately became happy. Today in society we are in a constant battle to find happiness.

Daniel Nettle introduces Happiness: The science behind your smile with three levels of happiness. Firstly, the joy and pleasure that is attained from experiences, secondly the reflection, an assessment one has based upon the joys and pleasure, over the negative experiences, in other words how satisfied one is. Lastly, coming to the realization of one's purpose, most importantly fulfilling one's potential. I find the third level to be crucial in that it's up to the human spirit to find their true calling, the means of following one's passion, a state of flow that gives you eternal love and happiness. Pursuing this forward, Carl Rogers a humanistic psychologist agreed that everyone has the capacity and abilities to achieve their goals, wishes and desires in life. Self actualization is accomplished through, fulfilling your destiny, from even the smallest goals to the biggest goals in your life. In addition, for a person to “grow” human nature must drive us to an environment that provides a foundation of acceptance from others, being seen with unconditional self regard and empathy. Nevertheless, reflecting, sharing, being listened to and understood by other human beings. Daniel Nettle states,

Our implicit theory of happiness will always try to fool us into thinking that amassing more positional goods keeping up and beating another human being will make us happier in the long run, but objectively this will not happen. On the other hand, health, autonomy, social embeddedness and the quality of the environment are real sources of happiness” (pg 87).

A happy mentality has an influence in all aspects in our lives. This is something of value that we can control and have, without worries of a struggle. We have to learn to appreciate things, without possessing them and work not for rewards, but because they are our love and passion. In the end this promotes high concentrations of dopamine, the happy chemical. This leads us to a attitude of well being. On the other hand, if we only

work for materialistic gain this only creates more worry. For example, working more for something like money, that furthers us away from our happiness, rather than something that you love and drives you to become better. Daniels endowment effect claims a stigma in human beings, in that it would be very difficult to get along, without something we now have, undermining that one has been in great condition, without it for years. This goes back to a materialistic conscience, we don't need to be rich to be happy. According to Daniel,

"The wanting system is supposed to enslave you, to make you maximize your reproductive success. The negative emotion system is supposed to be hyperactive, because suffering ten false alarms is better than getting killed. Thus our biggest enemy, if we decide we want to be happy beings, is the very psychology we have to use to do it" (pg 154).

Man was created to be in peace with himself, to understand and discover happiness in his interior. If he is in peace with himself he will be in perfect harmony and happiness, with what surrounds him. The realization that I wake up each morning knowing that it is a privilege to still be alive. With the little things I have I am content and happy because I appreciate and value the moment and experience. This goes back to Daniels comparison of positive and negative events and their impact on life satisfaction. Those considering negative recent events reported lower satisfaction than, those considering positive recent events. However, those who experienced negative distant events reported themselves as happier, than those that experienced positive distant events. For instance, olympic bronze medallists reported higher satisfaction, than silver medalists. For them, the comparison was with not getting the medal at all. Whereas, the silver winners, the natural comparison is the gold, which they missed on (pg, 38).

According, to a national happiness survey, in the UK more than half of the citizens rate their happiness an 8, 9, 10, on a scale from 1 through 10. The bulgarians had an average satisfaction of 5.03, whereas the Swiss had an average of 8.39. As a result, in 42 countries studied, the scale did not drop below 5 (pg, 51). One theory behind this is extroversion. The quality of being outgoing and open to other people. This enthusiasm and positive energy implements a self fulfilling prophecy. On top of this their openness, attracts them to other networks of people, with a realization that in the near future when he or she is down, they will be there for them, to get back up. This in return creates an environment of conscientiousness for the better. However, this restlessness creates risks and dangers, which are more present in extroverts, than introverts. Also, marriage has come to make people more happier, than single people. Happier people get and stay married more often, than unhappy people. Moving forward, our emotions such as

fear, shame and sadness are not as threatening. In the end, it may take a week, a month, even a year but you will overcome it. Pain is temporary. Depressed people have these negative racing thoughts, this burden that makes them exaggerate, with assumptions that if one thing goes wrong everything else is disastrous. Cognitive therapy has been shown to be effective in challenging the person mentally about these distortions and effective in reaching rationality.

Temperament is a force, within our personality, a crucial part to our well being and happiness. Pursuing this forward, Aldous Huxley's novel *Brave new world* examines an England where there was a cure to happiness, where it has been eliminated.

"Everyone's happy now" is the mantra repeated to the young 150 times a night for the first twelve years of life. A society that is disciplined to only be happy removing all other emotions (pg 115). Huxley states that happiness is accomplished, through a combination of genetic engineering, artificially controlled growth conditions and intense mind training from an early age. This reminds me of a film known as *equilibrium*, a plot set in the future in which both feelings and artistic expression are outlawed and citizens take daily injections of drugs to suppress their emotions. Imagine, if the entire world was given dosages of happiness, how would the world turn out. Would there be world peace? What would be a threat?

WorkCited

Kettle Daniel. *Happiness: The Science Behind Your Smile*. Front Cover. Daniel Nettle. Oxford University Press, 2005 Psychology 216 pages