

I have always thought of time as a precious commodity. I try not to waste it and feel bad if I do. Even sleeping in too late makes me anxious, like I've wasted the day and could have been doing more with my time. Ever since I was young I would think about what comes next: what I am going to look like when I'm older, what job I'm going to have, and what my family will be like. I still think about this, but now it's different. I think about the past now too; I try to remember my fleeting memories and disappearing days. I have realized that all the memories I remember most are memories where at the time I was thinking in the present, not about what would come next or what the outcome would be if I did something. Although I don't think that it is bad to think about the past or the future, I just think that there should be a balance between past, present, and future thoughts.

Everyone has an image of what a good life is when they are kids, usually stemming from television shows, movies and books. We might think of a good life as a high-paying job, a beautiful family, and a nice car and home. But we shouldn't be able to describe a good life in just one sentence, and today I often hear the saying that the definition of living a good life is living life to its fullest. What does living life to its fullest mean? One might assume that it means to make the most out of every situation and take full advantage of what you have and what you can obtain. But it all really depends on what makes you happy. All we really need to live a good life is happiness, whether that means a high paying job and a beautiful family, or living alone in a shack on the beach. Benjamin Franklin once said, "The Constitution only guarantees the American people the right to pursue happiness. You have to catch it yourself." No person other than you has the right to define what living and gaining happiness looks like; you have to do this for yourself. While each person may have similarities in what makes them happy, we are all individuals, and therefore different things make us happy.

Most people can agree that in order to be happy we need to live in the present, more than the future and past. If we do what makes us happy in the moment, then we are able to live full lives. If we think and live in the present then we will not be comparing ourselves to a version of us in the past, nor will we be thinking of the things we could do in the future. As humans all we really want is to be happy, and in America, we grow up to think that money will make us happy. This is evident when people are asked what they "want" most—many say some sort of material object. We don't necessarily know that we want happiness because it's so subconscious of us to want happiness, it's almost like it's implied that we want happiness but no one actually realizes it. When we make decisions to do things we decide on them based on how much fun we'll have or how much happiness we're getting out of the experience. So when we say we want a material object it's like asking for happiness because we're convinced that we can get happiness through money and objects when really we're just asking for happiness instead of actually obtaining it. This is the same with craving adventure because we are looking for happiness in a quantifiable form because it's easier to understand this way.

We crave adventure because we believe that the mystery of it and the outcome of the adventure will bring us happiness. We can't help but set goals for ourselves, even if they are small ones. We can't trust the future because anything could happen; there are no limits to what the future will bring. This is both scary and exciting: the future could bring good or bad but either way it's a surprise, an adventure. Science shows that optimists are happier people because they hope for the best in the future. They see the future as bringing good things, and are confident that even when something bad happens there will be something good ahead. When

pessimists think of the future, they might see their death or think of all of the money they are going to have to spend in order to pay off their mortgage. Just thinking in a pessimistic way can make a person sad. When an optimist is in the same position as a pessimist, he or she will be much happier and will most likely have more fortunate things happen to them in the long run. Jeremy Dean, a psychology researcher at University College of London, talks of what would happen if we separated the world into two psychological groups, optimists and pessimists. The optimists would be talking about how things can only get better in the world and discussing all of their fantastic plans for the future, while the pessimists would be talking about what could go wrong in the future and predicting that by some cruel twist of fate that the things they possess will be taken away from them. Optimists think of pessimists as downers because even when something sounds promising they go and make it bad. Whereas pessimists think that optimists aren't realistic and won't be able to handle the "real world" because of all of the cruel things in it. The pessimists don't think of the bright side of things even when there is one—they would just assume something bad was going to happen after the good thing.

Whether you think in a more minimalist way where you don't plan and don't like the idea of limiting yourself by setting goals, or you like to set goals for yourself and achieve them, each is motivated by wanting to achieve happiness. When a person has a minimalist fashion to their thinking they still have things they like doing, and when they do those things they become happy. If they like doing it then they might wind up in a job or position where they do it all the time, resulting in a constant stream of happiness. If one has an idea of something they want to do and sets goals for themselves, they may achieve happiness just knowing what they want to accomplish and then even more happiness when they achieve those goals. The driving force and motivator behind both of these approaches is happiness.

The idea of studying happiness was a foreign concept to the world of science until fairly recently. Before 1998 and early 2000's scientists and psychologists were only studying depression, which had been studied for hundreds of years before and was seemingly much less complicated than happiness. When psychologists like Ed Deiner (who is nicknamed Dr. Happiness), first started studying happiness, people thought he was crazy. Happiness seemed like such a simple idea, as long as you don't actually think about all of its different parts. After this, many people started jumping on the happiness train with Deiner, and tons of books were written on "how to be happy" and "why happiness is good for us." Our world then became obsessed with the idea of happiness and how to achieve it. Learning about happiness through a scientific lens has helped people realize that they really do need it to live.

The United States is very business-oriented, and with business, stress is a given. Compared to the whole of Europe, we have very high stress levels, which can be partially attributed to the amount we work and to the number of business hours in a day. Over the years many companies in the U.S. such as Target, Home Depot, and American Express have been converting their work space and atmosphere into a happier one, creating a stress-free environment, with more time off and activities and retreats for the workers. This is not only beneficial to the employees but to the companies as well because happier people are scientifically more productive people—the happier people are in their environment, the more they will care about said environment, their work, and their employer. When people don't care about their work they will be less productive and the quality of their work will suffer.

In Japan this initiative is not in play. Japan is such a stressed-out, work-obsessed country that people have literally worked themselves to death. This happens so often that there is actually a word for it, "karashi." Not only do people die from the amount of work they do, but also the

quality of work is lower than it would have been if these people were just given a break to be with their family and friends. Many people in Japan were interviewed about their family and jobs, and all of the interviewees said that their jobs are more important than their family and friends. Studies show that time with family and friends increases happiness, therefore a large percentage of workers in Japan are unhappy because they put their jobs before their family and friends.

There are many examples of happiness in the world, some big and others small. One particularly striking example is discussed in the documentary "Happy." A woman got hit by a truck; she was a beautiful debutant before this happened, and when she got hit, half of her face was wrecked. She had to get over thirty surgeries to fix the damage that was done. She was young when this happened, and was in the hospital for a long time. During her time in the hospital, her father visited her. When he visited, she experienced a strange feeling of remembrance to when she was a younger girl; the feeling or remembrance turned out to be memories of rape and abuse by her father. Due to her traumatic experience of being hit by a truck, many other traumatic memories were triggered. She was scared and sad but also glad to know the truth. Her husband became an alcoholic during her hospitalization and divorced her soon after she had all of her surgeries. She went through a period where she was deeply depressed, and during that time she met a new guy. He was amazing to her and called her beautiful. His name was Happy and they got married a year after knowing each other. She now says that she is happier than before her accident. Scientifically, there is no such thing as pleasure without pain because your nervous system looks at contrast. This woman was happier after her traumatic experience; if that experience hadn't happened, she might not have felt the same happiness that she feels now.

As soon as you stop making everyone else responsible for your happiness, the happier you'll be. To be happy, make others happy. These quotes represent two widely accepted theories on how to achieve happiness. This is very interesting because they are essentially opposites. The first is saying that you are relying on others for your own happiness and when you stop doing so, you will be happy. The second is saying that you have to make others happy to be happy yourself, so you have to rely on others to be happy. If you make someone else happy it will make you happy but if you rely on others to do things for you in attempt to make you happy it won't satisfy your need for happiness. The PBS production "This Emotional Life" teaches us that our friends *can* make us happy. If your friend is happy then your happiness will raise and if your friend's friend is happy then your happiness level will raise even more. Therefore, it's like a chain reaction: if you make your friend happy and they make their friend happy then pretty soon a ton of people are happy just because of human social interaction.

There are many different opinions and instructions about how we as humans should live. Each opinion is personalized to whoever is writing it; many scholars write about what they think people should do in order to be happy, but from their own point of view. This seems strange of course because each person has different views on different things and feels different ways in different situations. Most of the writing on how people should live just describes things that make that particular author happy. No one can tell you how to live your life, and no one can tell you how to live a full life because everyone's version of a full life is different. That is, except for the one thing that we all have in common: the constant search for happiness. When you look deeper at the implications of this conclusion you find that not only is there no one to tell you how to live, but no one can tell you how to be happy either. Have you ever thought something was utterly hilarious then tried to show it to someone else and even if it's just as funny to you the

second time, they aren't laughing at all? This is because we all have different views on the world, a different sense of humor and a different outlook on life, and even if we are put into the same situation as another our feelings and emotions are different. This makes it hard to judge how other people carry themselves and live their lives. Oxbow is a perfect example of this scenario—we are all from different places and had lives before Oxbow that we put on hold to come here. Even though we have learned a lot about each other, no one here knows your full story because they didn't grow up with you and they aren't you. Even if one of your childhood friends claimed they knew you they would be lying. Just because you know someone's general life timeline it doesn't mean you know how he or she felt at every little event that happened to him or her. So if we don't know how people feel all of the time, do we ever really know someone? Experiences shape us and influence us to change, whether it's a small way or a big way. If events in someone's life shape them, then the physical person is like a sculpture of their own life, we don't know what the sculpture means and can only base our thoughts on its physical appearance until we get to know it.

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