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How Do You Define Happiness?

By David Leonhardt

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by: **David Leonhardt**

I ran a contest in "Your Daily Dose of Happiness" to see how people define happiness. I was stunned to discover that I am the only person who defines happiness as an extra helping of cheesecake.

There were other shockers, too.

We know that money can't buy happiness ... except, of course, when we are flat broke. But I figured several people would define happiness, at least in part, as a bulging bank vault or "financial freedom". Just three people cited money in their definitions of happiness.

I also figured many people would cite health as part of their definition of happiness, as in "health, wealth, and happiness". But only four people mentioned health.

No health? No wealth? How do people define happiness?

The top rated mention goes to family. It seems that we might be flat broke and deathly ill, but a loving family will make us happy just the same.

Altruism and kindness are also key. It seems we smile by making others smile. Isn't that nice? No health and no wealth. Just smile.

Faith scores big, too. This works out very well, because we can ask our loving family to pray for a speedy recovery and a big win in El Gordo next month (assuming we recover first).

What does this mean? It means the spammers have it all wrong. They keep sending us useless emails about making money.

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A typical spam message says, "Get the insider secrets to making millions on the Internet. I will give you these valuable secrets for peanuts just because I love your smile so much. You could make \$5,433 in the next hour if you act now. Hurry. Don't wait. This is the real thing. You can trust me. All the others are just scammers."

Instead, spammers should be sending offers like, "Get the insider secret to building a loving family on the Internet. I will give you these valuable secrets for peanuts (and a big virtual hug) just because I love your smile so much. You could love your kids, spouses, uncles, parents, pets - anybody! - in the next hour if you act now. Hurry. Don't wait. This is the real thing. You can trust me. All the others are just family planners."

Spammers also waste emails on replacing body parts we never had and enhancing body parts we could never have, when what we really want is to know God better.

Here is a typical spammer email: "Hair loss? We just released the miracle cure. Grow your hair back

thicker than a wooly mammoth preparing for the next ice age. This is worth a gazillion dollars, but you get it free for just pennies a day. Give me your credit card number before midnight tonight. I can't afford to offer this price for long. Beware phony products that drip funny colors in your face or make hair grow in all the wrong places. This is the real thing!"

Instead, spammers should be saying: "Faithless? Book your luncheon with the Pope, dinner with the Dalai Lama and a one-on-one chat with Moses. Reserve your seat free for just a handful of pennies. Give me your credit card number before midnight tonight. Act now. I can't afford to offer this price for long. Beware phony reservations for meetings with Michael Jackson and other fake gods. This is the real thing!"

By the way, Mother Nature was also a part of many definitions of happiness. So take your family down by the river for a prayer. And if you can lend a helping hand to a chipmunk or a duck, you'll be the perfect definition of happiness.

The author is David Leonhardt, The Happy Guy. To receive his column weekly in your inbox, sign up at

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Top 4 Reasons Women Ride The "Emotional Roller-Coaster"

By Dr. Shawn Byler

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How Do You Define Happiness?

1. Women have learned and are in the habit of being driven by the approval of others. Most women allow the expectations of others to define them and therefore making the approval of others is responsible for their happiness. This pattern gives others' the power to make and take your happiness at any time. Approval seeking steals your happiness and doesn't allow you to ever get to know yourself, your wants, your desires, or your needs. A total disconnect. Thus an up and down roller-coaster of emotions. Not a pleasant way to live.

2. Women their achievements define their value. This belief causes several problems. When you believe that you are defined by your achievements, you are unable to feel good about yourself or have strong self-esteem unless you are accomplishing or producing which does not allow for down time, relaxation or free creativity. There is no room for you to just be... you. You identify yourself as results. This way of living allows for little or no joy, peace, or contentment because you are always looking for the next way to achieve. This is very different from healthy goal setting. Attaching your value to your achievements will ensure that you will not exit your emotional roller-coaster.

3. Women believe their children define them. Holding this belief can be very damaging for the parent and the child. When parents (unconsciously) hold the belief that their children define them or give them value, they will act in a way that pressures kids to perform at a standard they cannot match up to. Or parents try to force kids to have goals that the parent thinks is best and disregard what the kid or teen wants. Parents with this belief tie their sense of purpose to their children's results or who they become. This will steal your child's own sense of worth because he/she will only feel good about themselves when they meet your standards and expectations. And quite frankly this is not the unconditional love your child deserves. This is pushing your own agenda on your kids. Children, teens, and young adults need some (increasing as they age) space to figure out what they want and what is important to them! Discover your own identity and allow your children to do the same. Anything else will push your children away emotionally as they grow up. If you depend on your children's results (or your perception of what these results "should" be) you will stay on the emotional roller-coaster!

4. Women believe that their husbands are supposed to make them happy. Who of you thought when you got married (if you are married), or perhaps moved in with a significant other, that, "this person will make me so happy"? Or if you have experienced a divorce or a break-up, you may have thought, "this person makes me so unhappy". I am simplifying a bit, but the principal is true. The problem with this thinking is that if we allow people to "make" us happy, then at any time that person can "take" our happy. Only you are responsible for your happiness. You must create or develop an inner knowing that you are completely loveable, worthy, and valuable regardless of who is or isn't a part of our life!

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