



## What is Happiness?

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## What is Happiness According to Celebrities?

According to Charles Schulz:



**“Happiness is a warm puppy.”**

According to Joan Rivers:



**“At my age breathing.”**

According to Carson Kressley:



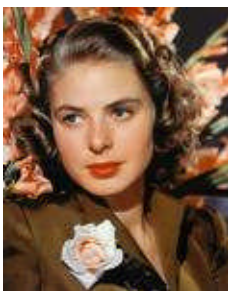
**“A world without pleated khakis.”**

According to Whoopi Goldberg:



**“My grandkids because they’re weird and wonderful.  
Great artists. A good man and good sex”**

According to Ingrid Bergman:



**“Happiness is good health  
and a bad memory.”**

According to Robert Louis Stevenson:



**“There is no duty we so much underrate  
as the duty of being happy. By being happy,  
we sow anonymous benefits upon the world.”**



## What is Happiness According to Psychologists?

### **Daniel Nettle suggests happiness is hard to define:**

“The concept of happiness is a bit like a mirage to social scientists – it shimmers on the horizon as an appealing object of study, but often has a tendency to slip away when it is most closely approached.” (Nettle, 2005, p. 6) “At first glance, happiness seems like love: if you have to ask whether you are in it or not, you are probably not. Few of us much care to define it, but... we know it when we see it.” (Nettle, 2005, p. 7)

### **John Reich notes the importance of mastery for happiness:**

“Happiness is being aware not only of the positive events that occur in your life but also that you yourself are the cause of these events - that you can create them, that you control their occurrence, and that you play a major role in the good things that happen to you. Of course, though to a lesser degree, happiness is also the awareness that you can prevent negative events from happening. This sense of mastery over both the good and bad events in your life contributes to an overall sense of well-being.”

### **Ed Diener notes the need for frequent positive experiences:**

“Put simply, frequent positive experiences are both necessary and sufficient to produce the state we call happiness, whereas random intense experiences are not. Thus, what we call happiness seems actually to be comprised of the frequent positives versus the infrequent negatives in our lives. ”

### **David Myers stresses happiness is what you define it as:**

“I view happiness as deeper than a momentary good mood - as an enduring sense of positive well-being, an ongoing perception that life is fulfilling, meaningful, and pleasant. But in reporting on the markings of happy lives I define happiness as whatever people mean when they describe their lives as happy rather than unhappy.” (Myers, 1992, p.)



## **Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi suggests:**

“Happiness is not something that happens. It is not the result of good fortune or random chance. It is not something that money can buy or power command. It does not depend on outside events, but, rather, on how we interpret them. Happiness, in fact, is a condition that must be prepared for, cultivated, and defended privately by each person. People who learn to control inner experience will be able to determine the quality of their lives, which is as close as any of us can come to being happy.” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 2)

## **He then goes on to suggest:**

“Yet we cannot reach happiness by consciously searching for it. ‘Ask yourself whether you are happy,’ said J. S. Mill, ‘and you cease to be so.’ It is by being fully involved with every detail of our lives, whether good or bad, that we find happiness, not by trying to look for it directly. Viktor Frankl, the Austrian psychologist, summarized it beautifully in the preface to his book *Man’s Search for Meaning*: ‘Don’t aim at success - the more you aim at it and make it a target, the more you are going to miss it. For success, like happiness, cannot be pursued; it must ensue... as the unintended side-effect of one’s personal dedication to a course greater than oneself.’”

## **Hence, he poses the question:**

**“So how can we reach this elusive goal that cannot be attained by a direct route?”**

## **How would you answer this question?**

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## **His answer is the following:**

**“My studies of the past quarter-century have convinced me that there is a way. It is a circuitous path that begins with achieving control over the contents of our consciousness.”**



## **Darrin McMahon notes happiness has meant different things at different times:**

“The happiness of yesterday bears only a scarce resemblance to the happiness of today.”  
(McMahon, 2006, p. xiv)

### **Ancient Greeks:**

Viewed happiness as a virtue. They saw it as a gift of the Gods.

### **Ancient Romans:**

Happiness meant prosperity and divine favor.

### **Early Christians:**

Christians were promised eternal happiness in heaven after they left all the suffering of earth.

### **Enlightenment Period:**

The view developed that you could be happy on earth and that it was unnecessary to have to leave earth to become happy.

### **19th and 20th Centuries:**

The view in this period was not only could happiness occur on earth, but it should be able to occur on earth. This view led to the “pursuit of happiness” in:

- the American Declaration of Independence, and
- the French Declaration of the Rights of Man

Today happiness is seen as a natural right and almost an obligation, so much so that in the 1990’s a cologne called “Happy” came on to the market. Likewise, the Dalai Lama wrote the book: “The art of happiness: A handbook for living”.

### **Future:**

Happiness will probably be looked at differently.



If you accept the fact that humans will view happiness differently in the future, then what I think happiness is and what celebrities and psychologists think happiness is does not matter. What is important is what you think happiness is. So please try answering the following question:

## What is Happiness?

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## Daniel Nettle believes there are 3 levels of happiness:

### Level 1 Happiness:

- Involves an immediate and direct sense of happiness
- Involves an emotion/feeling, such as joy or pleasure
- Is temporary (transient)
- Provides a feeling due to a desired state being attained
- Involves little thinking in obtaining this feeling

### Level 2 Happiness:

- Involves a feeling of being on the balance of things reasonably positive over time
- Does not focus much on feelings
- Focuses on judgments about the balance of positive and negative feelings
- Is similar to contentment and subjective well-being
- Is the kind of happiness studied by psychologists

### Level 3 Happiness:

- Is not an emotional state
- Refers to what Aristotle called *eudaimonia* (“the good life”, e.g., a life in which a person flourishes or fulfils their true potential)
- Involves personal growth, purpose, mastery of one’s environment, and self-directedness
- Feels different to every one, as every ones’ potential is different
- Is problematic because stating what an individual’s true potential is difficult. Who is going to be the judge?



## 3 LEVELS OF HAPPINESS:

**Level 1 - Momentary Feelings**  
Similar to Joy and Pleasure

**Level 2 - Judgements about Feelings**  
Similar to Well-being and Satisfaction

**Level 3 - Quality of Life**  
Similar to Fulfilling one's potential

**Source:** Nettle, D. (2005). Happiness: The science behind your smile. Oxford University Press: New York.