

August 7, 2023 - Monday Night Epicurean Happy Hour

Post by "Kalosyni" of August 7, 2023 at 10:01 PM

Here is the text of the presentation I gave this evening:

What do Happy People Do?

Vatican Saying 14 says: "We are born only once and cannot be born twice, and must forever live no more. You don't control tomorrow, yet you postpone joy. Life is ruined by putting things off, and each of us dies without truly living."

This brings up the idea of "carpe diem", since it reminds us not to postpone joy. But I don't think that this is the kind of carpe diem mentality that simply reminds us that we better go take that vacation that we've been putting off.

In another Vatican Saying (Vatican Saying 52): "Friendship dances around the world, announcing to each of us that we must awaken to happiness."

When it comes to happiness, positive psychology authors and researchers all seem to have their own favorite recipe for how to become happier. Some of the ingredients are the same and others are different. They are often "masters of the obvious", and studies often contain disclaimers such as this: "Additional research is needed to test whether these results replicate and generalize to other samples and situations."

Positive psychology is a relatively new branch of psychology which began in the 1990's and focuses on eudaimonia - the pursuit of happiness and the good life.

Recently I found an article titled: "What happy people do: The behavioral correlates of happiness in everyday situations". A study was done on the subjective versus the objective evaluation of happiness while observing participants being interviewed about themselves, and secondly, they were observed while participating in a social interaction with strangers. The patterns of observed behaviors associated with happiness were highly similar between the two situations. Happier people smiled more frequently, acted playful and behaved cheerfully, while unhappy people expressed criticism or guilt, or acted irritated or anxious. "Overall, the greater positive affect and more enjoyable experiences that happier people have in their daily lives is to a considerable degree reflected in their observable behaviors."

In another article titled "The number one thing to change to be happier" - Dr. Robert Waldinger, author of "The Good Life: Lessons from the world's longest scientific study of happiness", says the single most important thing to do to increase your level of happiness is to prioritize and invest in relationships with other people.

I have only just scratched the tip of the iceberg, in presenting some ways to increase happiness. In the reading that I have done over the past week, I've seen referenced many aspects of life that are touted as important to happiness: exercise or physical activity, optimism, self-confidence, and emotional resilience are all thought to be important.

Action for happiness.org - Has a page titled "10 Keys to Happier Living. Their homepage states: "Everyone's path to happiness is different. Based on the latest research, we have identified 10 keys to happier living that consistently tend to make life happier and more fulfilling." (I'll add emphasis onto the word "tend").

And it lists the following:

Giving - do kind things for others

Relating - connect with other people

Exercising - take care of your body

Awareness - live life mindfully

Trying out - keep learning new things

Direction - have goals to look forward to

Resilience - find ways to bounce back

Emotions - look for what's good

Acceptance - be comfortable with who you are

Meaning - be part of something bigger

It's important to remember that everyone's recipe for happiness is going to be slightly different, and we have to decide for ourselves what works for us.

As Epicureans, we take the art of taking pleasure seriously. Our recipe for happiness and joy includes paying attention to what our senses tell us, and using our mind's ability to imagine and plan for the best outcome, through our wise choices and avoidances.

And as Epicurus already knew, over 2300 years ago:

"Of all the things that wisdom provides for the complete happiness of one's entire life, by far the greatest is friendship." ([PD27](#))

As for actionable steps, from the first two of the positive psychology studies that I referenced above...**smile more and consider all the ways you can improve the quality of your interactions with people, and be sure to make it a top priority to schedule time with your family and friends.**

Sources:

[What happy people do: The behavioral correlates of happiness in everyday situations](#)

[What's the one thing to change to be happier](#)

[10 Keys to Happier Living](#)