

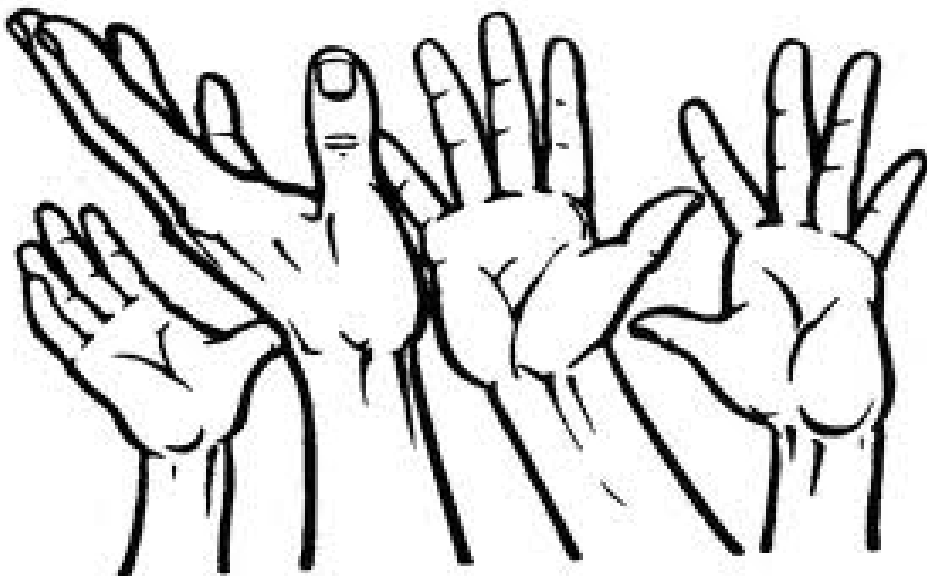
Holding the Hand of Happiness

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Holding the Hand of Happiness

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~Happy Right Here~

The clocks aren't ticking here. Frown wrinkles fade like the evening sun. Hands hold other hands. Laughter floats from every corner. The countless interlocking fingers rise up, creating an arch of happiness. Contentment hums with the mustard-colored bumblebees. Here is the garden where the lost key leads us, where the treasure map points, where the flower seeds grow. The sunshine reflects all happiness, and it comes here. Here, the nowhere place that all search for. Here, the place between sorrow and ecstasy. The only way to find this land is to stop searching and start living. Hilde Domin, a German lyric poet and writer, comments about this intangible land, "X marks the spot. Here I was happy." Here I am happy. Here you are happy, too!

~ The Happiest Quest on Earth~

Where is the idea more sought after than Paradise, or the Holy Grail, the lost city of Atlantis, El Dorado, and Shangri La? Happiness is thought to be more desirable than anything else, according to Alexandra Stoddard's *Choosing Happiness*. It is no wonder this emotion is searched for. Long before Thomas Jefferson's notable, "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" in the Declaration of Independence, the quest for happiness has been a core part of human existence. Howard C. Cutler goes as far as to say that the purpose of our lives is to seek happiness. People's concepts of happiness can differ from their experiences. However, when the ideas of happiness and the realities of happiness are closely intertwined, people are happiest.

While studying happiness I made a documentary entitled: *The Quest for Happiness*. (It was an amazing feeling to reach and surpass my goal. I originally wanted to interview fifty people, but that quickly expanded to many more.) It was very enjoyable watching people learn about themselves when being put on the spot to define happiness. I loved asking toddlers, to kindergartners, to ninety-year-olds. After each person's response, a huge smile would spread over my face. The minutes I spent everyday doing this were some of the happiest minutes of my day. Other's happiness made me very very happy. I have always known that, but I didn't know the full capacity of this feeling. I am more aware of the world and others than I have ever been before.

I also interviewed lots of people of varying ages in more depth. A few themes I found when I analyzed their responses were that people were all right with not understanding their own happiness. Many also talked about family and friends, and believed their conception of

happiness had changed a lot as they had aged. A few questions I asked were: Do you believe that to have happiness a balance of sadness is necessary? If you were going to design a society based on happiness what would it be like? How can you measure happiness? And what do you feel was your happiest stage of your life so far?

~The Angle of Age~

The sense of happiness changes throughout one's life and varies from experience to experience. Sonya Cohen, an artist who is 27, agrees: "My perception of happiness has changed in that I know it is not a permanent state I can obtain by any means." Tavi Wolfwood, a 14 year-old writer says, "As a small child, my basic conception of happiness was sugar and having fun in the moment. However, as I grew up, my conception of joy transitioned from being more self-centered into being more about the happiness of my family and friends." The recurring idea of smaller slices of life being very enthralling at a younger age is shared by an adventurous 13 year-old, Jasper Price-Slade. "When I was younger everything was amplified." Excitement arose with activities like, "going out for ice cream and playdates." Now, Price-Slade's happiness resonates with much bigger events like summertime. Eva Markham, a bright 10 year-old, finds a different truth in this speculation. "When I was younger, I had a smaller "list" of things that made me happy. Now, I have a lot more things to be happy about." The idea of happiness grows with one's life as everyone's experiences expand. Happiness becomes more derived from big moments, grand experiences, other's happiness, and knowing one's self as one ages.

Happy experiences clearly translate to one's perception of happiness. Clara Maslow, who has lived almost a century conveys her experience: "I had a very good background, and I'm very happy." She believes her happy childhood has affected her ideas of happiness currently. Maslow continued her thought by remarking,

"You have to decide for yourself, if you are happy with yourself. You know how your happiness changes, it changes with the moment. It also changes with your life. You have to look at your life, you can't look at your happiness; it doesn't tell you anything. And the life tells you everything. On a day-to-day basis life changes, and year to year it changes even more, and after twenty-five years it really changes." How happiness is embodied in our thoughts seems to evolve with one's life.

~People You Love~

For many, a common theme of happiness is being with people they care about. Eric Weiner writes in his book, *The Geography of Bliss*, "Our happiness is completely and utterly intertwined with other people." Weiner works across the world for New England Public Radio, as

a foreign correspondent.¹ He furthers his view, acknowledging that human bonds “clearly are the sources of our happiness.” Not everyone would agree with such an extravagant statement. It’s arguable that happiness can emerge in solitude, too. However, many people echo that happiness lives within human interaction. In my film, I asked more than one hundred people to define happiness. Almost everyone talked about having people that they love present in their lives. Tavi Wolfwood says, “9th grade so far has been the happiest stage of my life. I have had the most and closest friends throughout this year and I have felt the most at home with myself and with other people.” Wolfwood continues by concluding his thought, “The happiest moments of my life were the moments when I sat and laughed with my family and friends, when I felt completely at home.” I also interviewed Clara Maslow, a very sharp ninety-nine-year-old woman. The word interview is a stretch; I only had to ask Maslow one question, and I got a half-an-hour answer. Clara’s main idea is the constant theme of admiration toward other *Homo sapiens*. The happiest moments for Clara are being with people she loves. She cracks a large smile, saying that the epitome of happiness is, “to have someone that you care for, care for you, and they love you, and you love them.” Eric Weiner has memorably written, “Happiness is not a noun or a verb. It’s a conjunction. Connective tissue.” Deepak Chopra and Rudolph E. Tanzi write about how it is requisite to take care of others; make *them* happy! Tavi Wolfwood concluded his interview nicely, “Happiness is the feeling that comes with being at peace and being around people you love.” When surrounded by friends and family many attain maximum happiness. It is easy to see why; people you respect and care about learn from you, as you learn from them. The idea of deep connection with other people is a union of an experience of happiness and an expectation of happiness.

~The Injustice of Insecurity & The Satisfaction of Self Acceptance~

Insecurity is ingrained in our society. Self-acceptance is a rare quality. Unfortunately, many people judge others. This judging is contagious. People begin to judge and compare themselves as well. This insecurity brings unhappiness. Some personalities become too loud and cocky in order to bolster their self worth. Other personalities begin to lose sight of their self-worth by always putting others first. These selfless people need to start realizing that their priorities are level with others. When a personality becomes based on covering a deep flaw, something is awry. Sadly, these widely known extremes of insecurity do create many unhappy people.

A commonly forgotten form of happiness is feeling content with one’s inner being. One reason 99-year-old Maslow is going so strong is that she accepts herself. “I am very strongly happy with myself,” she says firmly. This aspect of Clara Maslow keeps her vital. During an interview with her she spoke her unfiltered ideas, “I live all alone, all day all night. It’s very lonely.” She misses her family that’s passed away. “I’m very good with myself. I know what I like, and I do

¹ Eric Weiner states, “Foreign correspondents like myself travel to the world’s *least* happy countries (think Iraq, Afghanistan, etc.) and seek out the least happy people there (refugees, war orphans). On one level, this is important, rewarding work. It can also be a real bummer. So I decided to write a book in which I sought out the world’s unheralded happy places. Countries that, in their own way, are busy pursuing that most American of pursuits: happiness.” The result is *The Geography of Bliss*, his new book.

what I like. I am pleased with myself, I'm not unhappy." Despite feeling alone, Clara Maslow still feels happy through self-acceptance. Amy Palatnick is lucky to also encounter the quality of blissful satisfaction. When defining happiness, Palatnick's compassion emanates from her heart, "Happiness is feeling content with myself, accepting myself, and feeling excited about my life. Feeling inspired, motivated, colorful. It's an expansive feeling that I feel in my heart center." Feeling uneasy with the self is a gap that can be bridged. When contentment is achieved, gratification is not as distant.

~Crumby Consumerism~

What many people think makes them happy is false. There are wrong approaches in seeking happiness. Social sciences have been showing that trust and being in a community are basic elements of human happiness. If people can't trust each other, our leaders, and our education, we can't feel safe. When people are threatened by mistrust, they are compelled to be selfish and competitive (Eric Weiner). As the American culture changes this century, these elements of trust and community are being extinguished. Human interaction is suffering. In the last century, communication has changed to be more devoid of human interaction. A century ago, people would gather together and talk. With the invention of the phone, face-to-face interaction decreased, then with the invention of computers and email much voice interaction became lost. Richard O'Conner, the author of *Happy at Last*, looks closely at how human interaction is suffering. He writes about the obvious contemporary example, which is how many people refrain from talking on the phone, and choose to send a fast text instead.

A common mistake in our culture is linking wealth and materialism with happiness. Deepak Chopra and Rudolph E. Tanzi notice that people are claiming to be less happy every year. Studies in Europe, and the United States, show for the last fifty years that people claim their happiness is going downhill. One big problem is that money does not lead to happiness. We are told by the media and powerful corporations that increasing wealth will fulfil our yearnings for happiness. The truth is that consumerism is way out of balance! The current theory is: "*If I get rich, I will be happy and satisfied.*" The reality is, "*If I get rich, I'll be depressed and anxious.*" Wealth isn't the answer (O'Conner). In recent surveys, countries like America and Japan have not grown happier as they have become wealthier. In an article from *The Economist* titled: "Happiness and How to Measure It", the plain reality is revealed: "Capitalism turns luxuries into necessities." The consumerist culture always tells us that if we just have a little more of something, we will feel fulfilled and happy. But once we get that item, or make more money each year, we still aren't satisfied. If we weren't such a materialistic culture, we would experience more happiness (O'Conner).

The plethora of possibilities lead us away from happiness, not towards it. Quantity is drastically overriding quality. The over consumptions are insane! O'Conner writes, "The amazing range of choices is meant to distract us from the fact that the choices themselves are meaningless." Just a few decades ago there were primarily three flavors of ice cream-- look at

an ice cream stand now. Beth Adel, a humanities middle-school teacher, shares her personal experience. Beth lived in China for a year. It was her first time living in a communist country, instead of a capitalist country. In China, there was one flavor and one size of ice cream. It was always, “red bean ice cream,” Beth laughs. She comments how the limited choices were the same with grocery shopping, clothes shopping, and many restaurants only had five dishes to choose from. When Beth Adel arrived back to the United States, her capitalist home country, the tables turned. When going out for ice cream, “There were forty flavors! When you finally decide on a flavor, you need to decide about a cup or a cone, a waffle or plain cone, a pee-wee, kiddie, small, regular, large, or super sized ice cream. Then there’s sprinkles or whipped-cream, chocolate or rainbow sprinkles...” She continues by remarking, “The number of choices made getting ice cream too much work.” There were too many choices in the capitalist American ice-cream stand. Beth Adel finds that the many choices are still too overwhelming, and they cease to bring her more happiness. Consumer culture has given us many opportunities like these: “In the last thirty years, the varieties of Pop-tarts available have increased from 3 to 29, Frito-Lay chips from 10 to 78, running shoe styles from 5 to 285. Nine hundred channels of nothing to watch.” (O’Conner). Consumeristic culture is overpowering and self-destructing.

The ancient Greek philosopher, Epicurus, wrote, “Reflect on what brings happiness, because if you have that you have everything, but if not, you will do everything to attain it.” People go to great lengths and spend a lot of money in search of happiness. This is the problem! An endless circle of dissatisfaction, unhappiness, and wastefulness. Satisfaction’s importance and presence is very downplayed in America. Paul Cohen, a very happy man I interviewed, remarked on happiness being a baseline that we go astray from. The *Economist* also published an article saying, “People are stuck on a treadmill: as they achieve a better standard of living, they become inured to its pleasures.”

~The Decline of Happiness (An Unhappy Society)~

Why are there so many indicators that happiness is declining? Overworking is inevitably encouraged! Lack of sleep is also prominent in almost every bedroom. Overworking leads to not having enough rest, and this translates to a lack of sleep. Our culture continues in this vicious cycle. Dean Schabner, a manager at ABC News writes, “Americans work more than anyone in the industrialized world. More than the English, more than the French, way more than the Germans or Norwegians. Even, recently, more than the Japanese. And Americans take less vacation, work longer days, and retire later, too.” This trend is getting worse decade by decade. Author Juliet Schor, who wrote the best-selling book *The Overworked American* in 1992, concluded that in 1990 Americans worked an average of nearly one month more per year than in 1970. Richard O’Conner found in his research that in the past twenty-five years, average Americans have increased their working hours from forty to fifty more a year than any other country in the world. A historian, James W. Loewen writes, “When we compare ourselves to others around us, having more seems to bring happiness, for earning a lot of money or driving an

expensive car implies that one is a more valued member of society. Sociologists routinely find positive correlations between income and happiness. Over time, however, and in an absolute sense, more may not mean happier. Americans believed themselves to be less happy in 1970 than in 1957, and still less happy by 1998” (Loewen, 285). A survey even concluded that half of the working Americans would gladly trade a work day of pay for a four-day week. (O’Conner).

Rushing is the mode in many industrialized countries. According to Richard O’Conner in, “Thirty-two cities worldwide, people in 2006 were walking on average ten-percent faster than they were in 1994.” People are rushing so much that they are no longer taking the time to walk anymore. The Surface Transportation Policy Partnership is worried about the lack of walking! “The Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey, conducted by the U.S. Department of Transportation, documents the decline in the amount Americans walk. Walking dropped from 9.3 percent of all trips in 1977 to just 5.4 percent in 1995. Yet more than one-quarter of all trips are still one mile or less, and by one calculation at least 123 million car trips made each day in the United States were short enough to have been made on foot.”

This society creates too much stress. New immigrants in America frequently have a rise in blood pressure. Sabrina Tavernise writes regularly for the *The New York Times*, she supports this research, “Becoming an American can be bad for your health. A growing body of mortality research on immigrants has shown that the longer they live in this country, the worse their rates of heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes.” Rates of anxiety, depression, as well as stress have skyrocketed around the world as countries are Westernized. These increased rates have led Americans to spend an estimated \$76 billion on anti-depressants annually. This is not even counting alcohol, illegal drugs, and other self-medications. (O’Conner). David Myers has shown in his book *The American Paradox: Spiritual Hunger in an Age of Plenty*, “Since 1960, the divorce rate has doubled, the teen-suicide rate tripled, the violent-crime rate quadrupled, and the prison population quintupled.” We live in a society that is so stressful that many citizens’ health is obviously suffering.

~The Right Kind of Optimism (Halfway to Happiness)~

In today’s world there are optimists and pessimists. Optimists can be divided into two groups as well: realistic and unrealistic. A realistic optimist doesn’t enhance expectations; they have a positive perception of what’s to come. The most healthy view is the realistic optimist. Charlie Kim expands on this theory as he writes about the Stockdale Paradox. Jim Stockdale was a Vietnam war hero who led more prisoners out of Vietnam than any other leader. Kim writes,

There are three groups the prisoners can be divided into: optimists, pessimists and those who had both. “Optimists died first. They were convinced by Christmas, everyone would be freed. As the days got closer to Christmas and it became clear they would not be free,

optimists started to get ill on or around December 25th. Their physical bodies gave up as their minds fell into despair. They all died from broken hearts. This is where all the pessimists say: "That's why I'm not an optimist." Well, the pessimists died next. They died a slow miserable death, they were convinced they would never get out. They all died eventually.

Happiness is the golden balance between pessimism and optimism. Only people who valued optimists' views and pessimists' views survived: "...have faith but confront the brutal facts of reality." They believed that they would prevail. The realistic optimists did not lie to themselves or give up hope. Amy Palatnick is a great believer in this theory. She considers herself an "Optimist, but realistic and accepting of negativity when it arises." Tavi Wolfwood has yet another idea. He believes he is a "mixture of both. At many times, when I am at my saddest and my worst," he says, "I am an optimist, and to make myself feel better I will lie in bed and think of all of the good happy things in my life. However, in everyday life, I act more pessimistic, even if it is only as a joke." Being a realistic optimist is the yin-yang of a balanced attitude.

It is unfortunate there is categorization in pessimists and optimists. The idea of pessimism and optimism creates a stereotype. People try to fit themselves into these cookie-cutter stereotypes. If people were not as focused on being labeled as an optimist or a pessimist, as passive or aggressive, or any other categories than the capacity for more happiness is created.

~Happiness is An Attitude~

Happiness is a choice, an attitude. This emotion is an outlook on simple situations. Baron Alexander Von Humboldt puts it nicely, "I am more and more convinced that our happiness or unhappiness depends far more on the way we meet the events of life, than on the nature of those events themselves." The more we love life, the more happiness and love we will get back in life. This theory can be used anywhere: the more devoted we are, the richer and more amplified the outcome. Alexandra Stoddard, an author, well-known interior designer, and philosopher believes dreaming big and sharing memories keep us all alive. Much sadness is out of the control of people, but what is in our control is our attitude about life. Therefore, how we think about day-to-day events and see the happiness inside little moments will conjure more happiness in our lives. People's conceptions of happiness should transition to their attitudes towards happiness.

Happiness varies with your outlook. Richard O'Conner agrees: "Much of happiness depends on your attitude toward what life hands you." Sonya Cohen's attitude is, "No amount of success or money could bring happiness but only continual striving, and indulgence!" People should continue to strive for greatness, as well as satisfaction. Everyone should strive to make themselves better, and to try to make the world better. O'Conner writes, "The revolution of happiness has to come at a personal level." This means the effort exerted to be better in any way

should result in more personal happiness. For some, striving means working hard, but many believe that working hard is the downfall of our happiness.

An opposing argument is that less work will actually not make people happier. A sense of purpose is crucial. When work weeks are shortened many people begin to waste their breaks away with television and other time-consuming, life-sucking, mindless activities. Well-being studies have also shown that elderly people who stopped working, tend to die sooner than their labouring peers (Global Markets Incorporated). Again, a balance of hard work is requisite for well-being and happiness.

~Time Flies When You're Having Fun~

Your outlook on future happiness has a major role in present happiness. Time is all part of our journey. Charlie Kim is the Founder & Chief Executive Officer of Next Jump. His technology company is headquartered in New York City. He also finds time to be an author for the *Huffington Post*. He wrote about Jim Loehr, who believes he found a formula for the derivation of happiness. Jim Loehr, himself, has written 16 popular novels, including his most recent *The Only Way To Win*. In Charlie Kim's most recent article, he summarizes Loehr's new theories,

"50 percent of your happiness is based on your PAST. How you were raised, your parents, your siblings/friends/etc. -- things that you cannot change. They are in your past. 10 percent of your happiness is based on your PRESENT situation. This was the shocker... only 10 percent. Where you live, your job today, how much money you make, your current relationships be it with family, spouse, girlfriend/boyfriend, friends, etc. 40 percent of your happiness is based on your FUTURE outlook of your own life. Meaning, you can 5x [multiply by 5] your happiness, what's in your control -- remember the past is done and can't be changed, by changing your future outlook."

Kim makes many generalizations, but his input is provocative. Happiness is non-quantifiable. You can't place a number on happiness! On another note, a formula for happiness changes with the stage of one's life. The biggest flaw in Kim's theory is that happiness is different for everyone. One's joy is as unique as a fingerprint, a retina or an iris, and a snowflake.

The time one feels happy can be short. Happiness, or the lack thereof, ties all of our experience and moments in life together. Robert Frost writes about how happiness is fleeting, "Happiness makes up in height for what it lacks in length." Epicurus expands on this idea, "He savors not the longest time but the span of time that brings the greatest joy." The length and duration of a happy experience is devoid of meaning in the moment. When we conceptualize happiness, the matter of time is usually forgotten.

On another note, a current view in psychology reports that happiness can never be

permanent. The authors of *Super Brain*, Deepak Chopra and Rudolph E. Tanzi, argue that happiness can last. "Our feeling is that the problem lies with reality making. If you have more skill at creating your own personal reality, than permanent happiness will flow." They believe a way to be happy is to live for the present. Epicurus agrees with this theory. The Greek philosopher writes, "The time for happiness has not yet come or has passed. Young or old, it is necessary to love and practice wisdom, so that in old age you can be youthful by taking joy in the good things you remember." Living in the present moment is an important factor of happiness. Alexandra Stoddard writes, "Let us all live now in these present moments of happiness and joy." The notion is spot on. Clara Maslow has been leading a very happy life, and she comments "I'm still happy with what I do." Maslow continues by reversing the interview, "What is your life today? What do you do that makes you feel good now?" By breaking the form of the interview, and instead asking me the question, she reminded me not just to think about what I wanted to accomplish, but to be present in the moment.

~Linking Sorrow with Happiness~

Sorrow and happiness go hand in hand. Many people believe in order to be happy sorrow must be avoided, but this is not the case. Tavi Wolfwood says, "Without a certain measure of sadness, there is nothing to compare happiness to, so it loses its value. I think a person needs just enough sadness to know what it feels like to be sad so that they enjoy their feeling of happiness and content to the full extent that they can." Amy Palatnick also shares this view, "I believe, for myself, that the greater the range, the higher we can go. If I never got sad then there would be nothing special about happy." An awareness of the more discouraging aspects of life can lead to some very content people. Richard O'Conner, the author of *Happy At Last*, is "clinically depressed." O'Conner states, "If you want to be happy, you have to let yourself be sad." Because he does not cloud his mind with comforting illusions, when he finally reaches happiness again it is far greater than if he had always maintained it in his life. Amy Palatnick is not clinically depressed, but still she is open to linking sorrow with happiness. "I say 'yes' to all emotions, and invite them in like a rainbow. What would red be without purple and green? I believe that if we fight to keep any emotions away, they will find a way in." Palatnick also comments, "What you resist persists. When I feel sad, I like to feel really sad, so then when I feel happy, I can feel really happy!" The famous philosopher and poet, Kahlil Gibran, indicates how one can't have joy without sorrow; they are inseparable.

It is all right, actually requisite to not be happy all the time! "A lifetime of happiness! No man could bear it: It would be hell on Earth," wrote George Bernard Shaw, in his play *Man and Superman*. Jasper Price-Slade preaches the simple concept, "I think if we were happy all the time, then our lives would be pretty dull." Sonya Cohen seconds this notion. "Really 'happy' people are kind of boring." She notices that, "Happiness is unstable by nature." Her best point is the conclusion she makes, "Seeking happiness keeps us alive!" Living every second and appreciating will bring prolonged happiness, we don't have to search for it.

Happiness and sadness are a balance. They are bound together. If they weren't so intertwined neither would be as meaningful. "With anger, depression, sadness, worry, anxiety, stress, fear etcetera...we get a greater range of the emotional human experience." (Amy Palatnick). Carl Gustav Jung extrapolates, "The word "happy" would lose its meaning if it were not balanced by sadness." Kahlil Gibran believes joy is sorrow unmasked, and you can't have laughter without knowing how to cry. The more grief you experience the more potential happiness you can obtain. It is obligatory that happiness is linked with unhappiness. Fanatics of optimism or pessimism, happiness or sadness, consumers or non-materialists all will experience greater happiness if stability is found within the extremes. The range of emotions intensifies our life experiences. The problem begins when one extreme or the other is dwelled upon. Life is all about balance.

~Lasting Happiness~

Lasting happiness can be approached from numerous angles. One kind of sustained happiness is the notion that the emotion thrives in simple everyday activities. Alexandra Stoddard believes that small happy moments are the core of happiness. Another knowledge of happiness is how enthusiasm in life is just as important as about anything else. Enthusiasm increases energy and well-being. When moments have this golden balance, smiling and happiness shine through. Stoddard states, "Life is to be celebrated, not merely lived."

Lasting happiness is an underlying idea of contentment. Deepak Chopra and Rudolph E. Tanzi write, "It takes the entire brain, acting as an integrated whole," to have true happiness. An example these two authors gave is a way to have lasting happiness is to work for something you love. Rightfully, there are countless approaches to lasting happiness, and short-lived happiness as well. Sonya Cohen says a continual stream of happiness and contentment is, "Having a sense of purpose, a sense of mobility into the future." A different idea to lasting happiness is religion and spirituality. This is the Dalai Lama's guide to finding happiness. However happiness is found should be embraced by individuals. Security, fundamental needs, connections, and a powerful set of goals are another common and long-term definition of happiness.

~The Sweetness of Simplicity~

A necessary part of life is simplicity. A well-known Buddhist belief is that a simple life leads to contentment and joy. A simple life has always been a goal that many strive for. Richard O'Conner writes, "Happiness is smaller than you think." He urges us not to overlook the little things that make you happy. A favorite song on the radio, surprises, letters, a card game, et cetera. These bursts of happiness are au naturel moments. Epicurus, an ancient Greek philosopher, believed, "Training yourself to live simply and without luxury brings you complete health, gives you endless energy to face the necessities of life, better prepares you for the

occasional luxury, and makes you fearless no matter your fortune in life.” A simple life is not a filled life, but it is a *fulfilled* life. Happiness in being alive is a rooted feeling that keeps you complete.

~Holding onto Happiness~

One of the frequent ways of living happily is to have enthralling and stimulating experiences. This is the consensus derived from many interviews. When Amy Palatnick was questioned about the happiest stage of her life she responded with, “I have loved traveling, being on the road, [and] meeting strangers. I have loved falling in love. I have had some very high moments doing Nia [A dance cardio fitness class]. Also, having a baby was the highest experience of my life: going through the actual birth process. I [also] had a short period of time when I felt “enlightened,” which was hard to beat!” Palatnick’s happiest times in life are, “Edgy, transitions, times of newness and exploration!” This also rings true for Eva Markham. New experiences, challenges, and setting goals keep her a very happy girl. Philip Gilbert Hamerton is quoted in *The International Dictionary of Thoughts*, “The happiest life is that which constantly exercises and educates what is best in us.” Memories of friendship, love, adventure, and personal achievement have been very happy moments in Sonya Cohen’s life. Once again, being out of one’s comfort zone brings happiness! Jasper Price-Slade agrees and values both extremes. Thrilling and relaxing moments are both sources of happiness for Price-Slade. He gave examples like, “Stargazing, fishing, performing on stage, and tossing a frisbee around with friends.” Living happily includes times of relaxation and arousal.

Laughter is a large contributor to one’s happiness. Instead of being caught up in pursuing happiness, noticing what creates laughter and smiles is far more essential. The act of laughing has so many health benefits as well as making you happy. There is even laughter yoga now. Richard O’Conner writes, “People with a good sense of humor are less affected by stress.” When stress is not such a large factor of life, people experience grander happiness. Tavi Wolfwood defines happiness with laughter as well. “Happiness is the feeling of humor, content, and living life to the fullest.” The Dalai Lama realizes that not everyone can smile and laugh so easily. Uncoincidentally, the Dalai Lama is always happy and laughing! Happiness has led the Dalai Lama on his path to enlightenment. He says that because people have different dispositions, the world really needs seven billion religions, for its seven billion people. Reminiscing about laughter and smiling is as crucial as producing new laughter and smiles.

Smiling also predicts future happiness; in studies about high school yearbook photos, smiling more resulted in more happiness in one’s future. Matthew Hertenstein, author of *The Tell: The Little Clues That Reveal Big Truths About Who We Are*, studies two facial muscles in a number of college yearbook photos. He says, “The people in the yearbook photos who smiled least were about five times more likely to get a divorce at some point in their lives compared to those who smiled most,” Hertenstein found similar results in childhood photos. He believes there’s a correlation between how one smiles in school photos and how happy one will be as an

adult, even how long someone will live!

~The Journey of Heavenly Happiness~

Tavi Wolfwood remarks, "I think that our current society is very happiness based. Much of how we rate our days and much of how we spend our lives is based on how happy we were during the day." A main goal should be to strive for a happy self, society, country, and world. Start smiling! Laugh more often! Notice when happiness extends its hand. Reach out and hold the hand happiness lends! Focus on making others happy: this will no doubt increase your personal happiness! These actions will create an infinite circle of hands holding other happy hands. Are you reaching out to happiness? Or is happiness grasping your hand? Tavi Wolfwood comments, "I don't think that happiness can be measured. It is a feeling that cannot be fully described or measured, much as love cannot be measured." Study your self, and work to understand others as well.

Happiness *is* an important journey. Eric Weiner who travels the world in search of the happiest place on earth, agrees that happiness is a quest, but he knows, "There's more than one path to happiness." Deepak Chopra and Rudolph E. Tanzi make a common point about how the experience of pursuing a goal is better than the actual goal. The journey towards anything is better than the end of the road. They also write how dreams are better than achievement. A happy life could be your goal, but having lasting happiness will be a greater and a more rewarding journey. When the concepts and realities of happiness are closely intertwined, people are happiest. In many cases the experiences and previous perceptions of happiness are integrated as one. Spontaneous happiness should also be valued, however knowing what makes oneself happy is enlightening. May your happiness be boundless.

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