

WHAT HAPPINESS IS

RESPONSE PAPER:

Can you envision a tool capable of gauging the happiness level of a smiling child or someone who, when treated kindly, experiences relief from oppression? The article "What Happiness Is" is written by Eduardo Porter, born in 1963. This article is a selection from author's book "The Price of Happiness". Happiness is subjective for psychologists and economists, while others see it as an objective measure of quality of life. Happier people tend to be healthier and more satisfied, contributing to both personal well-being and economic growth. Acts of kindness can also lead to happiness. Happiness is a concept subject to diverse interpretations that can be manifested universally in health, worldly pursuits, in the company of others. The author's exploration of happiness sheds light on valuable insights connecting health and optimism.

The author links health and happiness through "immediate well-being," but lacks empirical support and overlooks complexity, requiring further analysis to understand the correlation. This specific lens through which they see the world allows them to maintain more of an internal locus of control (a sense of personal control over things), as well as resulting health-promoting behaviors and is associated with many benefits, including longevity. One study found that optimists had a **15%** longer lifespan on average (**Zevon ES, 2019**). The research shows that happiness aligns with both health and optimism. While ensuring health may depend on wealth to some extent, it's important to remember that money can buy blood, but not life.

We disagree with the author's idea that "losing something makes us less happy, while gaining the same thing makes us happier". Sometimes the pain of losing is psychologically twice as powerful as the pleasure of gaining. The loss felt from money, or any other valuable object can feel worse than gaining that same thing (**Tversky, 2020**). Even successful figures like Elon Musk have teared up while discussing their challenging journeys to success, with Musk advising against aspiring to his level due to the difficulties he encountered. These examples underscore that material wealth may buy possessions but not the essence of true happiness or the value of light itself. As true happiness often transcends the

material, it leads us to explore the role of strong social connections in cultivating genuine happiness.

We agree with the author's point of view that we experience happiness in the company of our friends or our loved ones. The part of human nature's default mode is to be social. One theory: people have an innate (and very powerful) need to belong. Human beings are an ultra-social species and our nervous systems expect to have others around us (***Sarah DiGiulio, 2018***). Research using **Cyberball**, a virtual game, shows that exclusion from a group, even in a simulated setting, elicits negative emotions. Excluded participants commonly report sadness, frustration, and decreased self-worth. The above examples show that in the presence of our loved ones or friends, we encounter the essence of genuine happiness.

In conclusion, Eduardo Porter's "What Happiness Is" explores the multifaceted nature of happiness, linking it to health, optimism, and social connections. It's a significant study across disciplines like psychology, suggesting that genuine happiness is found not just in personal pursuits, but in our relationships and connections.