

0.1 Chapter 4: self: Mood

0.2 Mood

1 On Leaping About

On holiday in the Caribbean, Cameron Diaz has been undertaking philosophical experiments. She is investigating how middle-aged people can be happy without working, spending money or trying to have sex.

Her experiments have been guided by the observation that small children are usually far happier than adults. One reason is that a child of six leaps around up to 3,000 times more a year than the average 46-year-old and, when doing so, frequently emits sounds of unrestrained joy like ahayhaaa and woohieeee. Can adults learn something from this? A Hollywood star investigates.



1.0.0.0.1 Leaping

In their forties, people almost never jump from small rocks into shallow water. Its not at all necessary to do this outdoors, let alone in the Caribbean. A sofa or bed and a thick carpet work just as well. Maybe better in some ways. Getting the arms up in the air is crucial. When older people leap they tend to hold

back and keep their arms down by their sides, or they do a half-hearted thing kind of clenching their fists and keeping them near their chests. Unfortunately this reduces the pay-off quite a bit.



1.0.0.0.2 Sand running

Most adults look silly when they run in very soft sand. Your feet sink in so much it looks as if you are staggering. Which means we get reluctant to do it. But that's a great pity because sand running is one of the surest ways of raising the spirits. The indoor version involves putting cushions and pillows in a line across a room and darting back and forth along them. Happiness can have some remarkably unintellectual, achievement-free foundations.



1.0.0.0.3 Splashing

Then theres chest-splashing. Many adults find splashing of all kinds difficult. You worry about water getting in your eyes or onto something precious lying nearby. Cameron may have practised in the bath for a while.



1.0.0.0.4 Selfie-ing

As for photos, you'd think there could be nothing simpler than taking a few of yourself and chuckling over the result. But over the age of forty it's not so easy. You worry about how you look. The signs of ageing are always there. The inner critic is always saying what's happened to my chin? Does my mouth really look like that? Where did that wrinkle come from? It's a real battle between fun and vanity. So often we try to control our appearance because we're worried about what other people will think of us. It's a kind of phobia. But by repeated exposure to slightly silly and disappointing pictures of yourself, you can actually get used to it. It bothers you less. You mature.

Cameron Diaz was not necessarily conscious of her own investigations into the sources of contentment.