Key

Learning, curiosity, sex and exercise are keys to happiness. The capacity for these is in us, all of us. Neuroscience through brain imaging can now watch our brains light up happiness from within from these keys.

Agree that a key made of wood would warp and not hold up over time, but then neither do controlled substances that demand at the same time they promise. Relief builds tolerance, diminishes over time, loses effect and potency. More is required; need escalates. .Glass keys will break if dropped, but science tells us the keys to happiness are in our brain.

Consider the elderly or the invalid in confined settings who aren’t getting sexual intimacy or exercise; who are no longer curious or learning. Some of us are even less tolerant of boredom than others; however, curious people are more prone and more likely to take risks.Learning and curiosity—novelty-- alleviate boredom

Stefan Klein[[1]](#endnote-1) writes,“Dopamine affects deeper-lying centers that control attentiveness and provide greater focus.”Under the influence of dopamine we are optimistic, yes; and, comfortable and relaxed, ergo physiological balance is achieved. This is good; preferable, even.

“Happiness is what we feel in the [present] moment of the experience. Satisfaction is that which remains. [pg.200.] *Reculer pour mieux sauter*. (“Step back in order to jump better.”) –Klein.

Being allowed autonomy, your own choices for your life, is happiness. Think teenagers who want to get out and do their own thing.

Stress lowers good feelings, good feeling raise self-esteem.Remember positive experience, Klein says. “Be drunk on what? …but get drunk” he quotes Baudelaire. “Positive feelings come about in two different ways: when we want something and when we get something we wanted.”

If you take nothing else away from her book, Susan Schneider[[2]](#endnote-2) wrote, “Let it be this, none of us gets enough praise.” Start a praise diary. Be positive, keep a happiness diary. Klein agrees.

“Turn your attention to something positive immediately, walk away from the negative [pg.197] lest those dendrites grow. Feelings of helplessness (futility) are the largest enemy of happiness**.** “Enjoying the present to the fullest,” he wrote, is comparable to euphoria. “The brain systems for desire intensify insight and make us inventive.” Asked what was his favorite piece the musician said, The one I’m working on. Ergo, the bliss of creativity. An actor agreed The one I’m rehearsing. Another actor said he refused to watch his celluloids. And the writer? No. I would grimace at how it could’ve should’ve been better, what I would’ve done differently. Read it after it’s published? That euphoria, that creative act is done.

“There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so,” Klein quotes Hamlet. Albert I. Ellis’s (1913-2007) rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) theory dovetails this nicely; i.e., it isn’t what happens, but how we perceive it.Our minds go negative naturally in response to the survival instinct of fight//flight. The mind also exaggerates, amplifies and magnifies the distortion in order to jumpstart precaution. “The mind is a dangerous place to be alone without supervision,” a 9-1-1 Supervisor said. “Catharsis: terror gives way to relief.” Contrast this with a “key to enjoyment, with pain vs. pleasure.” **[**pg.144] Separation from what makes us happy causes “feelings of loneliness and emptiness, loss of appetite, depression, sleeplessness and irritability." Active physical exertionis one of the keys to happiness**,** ergo**,** being inactive, being unemployed, is to feel undervalued.

Contrast pleasure-seeking from addiction: the source of pleasure is harmful only when it interferes and disrupts normal functioning. “It was pathetic, I was disgusted,” Klein quotes a songwriter of his addiction, when his inhibitor switch was off and when his compulsion was uncontrollable and no longer rewarding or pleasurable [pg.128.] “Addictions are learned,” a search for escape, albeit temporary even when the outcome and consequences are adverse.

Affection, intimacy and touch are one of the keys to happiness.When we are stroked, Stefan Klein wrote, we are “calmed by touch.” Kleinpoints out that, “Our hormonal response to touch, to sex, and to proximity is so powerful that it can trump our better judgment.“ Bad judgments, however, made under the influence of sex are not good. Alice Adams[[3]](#endnote-3) “knew the hard truths of human life: that people (especially those in the sway of sexual passion) often behave badly, but generally have good intentions.”

Sex is**. “**The human tendency to attach to our sexual partners is built into our chemistry,” Schneider writes [Ibid]. H*owever, men do not like to be needy or perceived as such. Men want to be able to move about free of dependence and to be independent,* Klein writes. “Over time, he continues the [effects of] pleasure wane.” It’s important to choose intimate partners wisely. “Wanting and liking are two different matters,” Klein began a chapter. The “frenzy of enjoyment,” he wrote,” interrupts time.”

“Not everyone obtains the sexual activity and partner they want,” to connect, attach or to the amount or kind,” [Ibid: Smart Sex.p.68]Klein advises, “The magic formula for enduring love is sex,” ergo, keep expectations controlled, let them not run amok.

In Smart Sex the scholar notes that, “Oxytocin decreases cognitive ability.” The phenomenon of oxytocin and dopamine explains lactating nursing mothers of newborns being forgetful, and of how we can’t think straight and are tongue-tied in the presence of the one we love, and of how people in love run for the phone.

1. Klein, Stefan The Science of Happiness. Marlowe, N.Y., 2006 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Schneider, Susan Smart Sex: Finding life long love [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. (Copyright: PWxyz, LLC.) [↑](#endnote-ref-3)