

On my pursuit of Happiness...

"A foolish man seeks happiness in the distance. The wise grows it under his feet."

- James Oppenheim

Is it some formula?? Probably a mix of work, love, fulfilment, psychology and some good life? This question has been examined at Harvard for the past 72 years. And it gets as vague as it can. It varies from person to person. How about this - I'm happy when I make the dough myself. When I'm in my 80's and have not spent a single day at the hospital. I cooked that *palak paneer* that tastes exactly as it was made at my favourite restaurant. If someone asks me that I had the right to live my life all over again, and what is that one thing I'd want to change, and I'd write that I don't think I'd change anything at all. Well, my list would be never ending. This would be my happiness, but completely different from someone else's. No matter what this difference might be, the result of happiness is unbelievable.

We were all taught that, Hard work = Success = Happiness. Right? But WRONG! Research shows that happiness is actually a precursor of hard work leading to success. Those who are happy, experience less stress, achieve aggressive goals, remain calm, are more energetic, earn higher income and live longer. Engaging in happy, positive, real life relationships leads to release of chemicals that help fight stress and improve concentration and focus. Your attitude towards life and how you feel, all arise from your actions, thoughts and where you focus your energy.

And one of the most interesting question is: "**What brings Happiness?**" The answer is: there are three things that bring happiness - **genetics, events and choices.**

Yes GENETICS! Genetics makes up 48% of our happiness! Do you have a friend who is happy (to the point of irritating) all the time? But yes, it could be genetic. Just as a person could be grumpy or brooding - it's in your DNA!!

If that is the case, half of it has already been taken away from you, and you have to get the other half right! The second is - life events. About 40%. If only I graduate from a good college with a good CGPA, then I'll be happy. If only I marry that person, then I'll be happy. We, humans, are very goal-oriented creatures. We always focus on the big things. But the happiness from these big things never lasts. It's actually the small events that give happiness. Little things such as spending enough time with family, having a good bunch of friends, watching your favourite sport, are those that add up to have a long term effect.

The third are the lifestyle elements that we choose - 12% - which is absolutely under our control. And this include four things - Faith, Family, Community and Work. Faith is pretty obvious. Family - having solid relationships is very important. These are the things that shouldn't slip away. Community includes cultivating important friendships and being charitable. What is most important is WORK. And no! It's not because of money, but because of earned success! The feeling of achieving something, some target, or some contribution to the society, but not money. It matters whether you are creating value or not. The feeling that you are earning your success is what gives you happiness the most.

The pursuit of happiness sounds complicated, but it actually isn't. You have under your control, the portfolio to give you the maximum happiness. Start paying more and more attention to faith, family, community and work. Be like the stone dropped into the pond that generate ripples of happiness which then spread to all.

It starts with you, yet it is bigger than you. LIVE HAPPY!

Soundarya Karamcheti
IMTH 8