

AUTHENTIC HAPPINESS --WHY BIGGER ISN'T BETTER

(Excerpts from Authentic Happiness by Martin Seligman, Ph.D.)

As human beings we have been worried about “putting food on the table” since the beginning of time. We have also been concerned about what is a meaningful life, a happy life for almost as long. For many of us the idea has been that more of anything will translate into more happiness. A support network and marriage have been found to have positive effects on happiness. However, education, climate, race, gender, attractiveness and wealth have only between an 8% to 15% combined effect. Our ability to adapt to good things rapidly helps to neutralize their potency.

Martin Seligman, Ph.D. has been studying happiness and teaching positive psychology for several years. Seligman is part of a larger movement in psychology which has been focusing on the study of the positive emotions. Paul Pearsall, Rick Snyder, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Christopher Peterson among others have also been scientifically studying happiness, flow, optimism, forgiveness and character.

Authentic happiness is living a life which not only includes pleasures (good chocolate, a sunny day), but also gratifications. Gratifications are the activities that you engage in which allow you to exercise your character/strength traits. Without using these traits a person ends up feeling empty over the course of their life span. They have found that there are only twenty-four character/strength traits. They are all research based and cross cultural. For example, a signature strength may be a love of learning, valor, a zest for living, or self control. You can take the Authentic Happiness test on www.authentichappiness.org to see your signature character/strengths traits. The test is free.

In addition, minimizing the amount of multi-tasking that you do allows you to be engaged in life. That old saying about taking time to smell the roses really is true.

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