Happiness: How much is enough?

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Sponsored by the Science, Happy Humanities and Society Program, the College of Happier Arts and Sciences, and the Center for Happiest Teaching Excellence
The Happiness Staff

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- Patricia Pay No Attention To That Woman Behind The Screen Turrisi, Associate Professor of Philosophy and Religion; Director, Center for Teaching Excellence
The Happiness Panelists

- Virginia Stewart, History
- Don Habibi, Philosophy and Religion
- Ken Diehl, Engineering
- Chris Dumas, Economics
- Gregory Bechtel, Nursing
- Sue Combs, Health
- Carrie Clements, Psychology
- Tim Ballard, Biology
Virginia Stewart
We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; ...  

*Declaration of Independence* in Congress, July 4, 1776

Men are constant in pursuit of happiness.  
*John Locke, Essay on Understanding*

The great pursuit of man is after happiness; it is the first and strongest desire of his nature. .... there can be no real happiness without religion and virtue, and the assistance of God’s grace and Holy Spirit to direct our lives in the true pursuit of it.  

*Lawrence Sterne, Sermons of Mr. Yorick*

... the happiness of the society is the *first* law of every government.  
*James Wilson, 1774*
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James Wilson, 1774
Don Habibi
Happiness and Hedonism

The basic doctrine of hedonism holds that happiness (i.e., pleasure and the absence of pain) is the sole intrinsic good in life. Therefore, everything else that we value, desire, or pursue is ‘good’ insofar as it leads to happiness. The most useful way to understand the concept of hedonism is to distinguish between its psychological and ethical applications.

**Psychological Hedonism** is descriptive and makes a very strong claim about human nature. It holds that humans are constituted by nature such that they always pursue pleasure and avoid pain. All of our actions can be explained by this claim.

**Ethical Hedonism** is normative and holds that we should pursue pleasure and avoid pain. Happiness is the sole and proper aim of human action, as it is the ‘good.’ For most of the philosophers who advocate it, the emphasis is not on physical pleasure but on moderation and the cultivation of intellectual pleasures.
Epicurus (341-270 B.C.E.)

The most important version of ethical hedonism among the Ancient Greeks is Epicureanism, which regards ‘happiness’ as a mind free from disturbance and a body free from pain. The good life is secured by moderation of appetite and desire, and the pleasures of reason, peace, friendship, and aesthetic contemplation.
The most important version of ethical hedonism is **utilitarianism**, which holds that one should always choose the course of action that will lead to the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. The utilitarians defined ‘happiness’ as pleasure and the absence of pain. Happiness is the ultimate object of desire as well as the standard of morality. In Bentham’s utilitarianism, pleasure and pain can be measured and quantified. He is rightly regarded as the father of social science and the vast enterprise of decision theories such as cost/benefit analysis.
John Stuart Mill (1806-1873)

- In J.S. Mill’s version of utilitarianism, the emphasis is not on quantity, but rather on the qualitatively ‘higher’ pleasures that draw upon our distinctly human capacities for cultivation and refinement.
Additional Notes on Hedonism

http://cte.uncwil.edu/test_sites/happiness/habibi_notes.doc
For an experience of the qualitatively superior, higher pleasures, you are invited to come tonight to the Hawk’s Nest for a Music Listening Extravaganza!!!
Chris Dumas
Ken Diehl
Gregory Bechtel
The Epidemiology of Happiness

- Happiness is a transcultural phenomena although interpretation of the concept varies significantly
  - **West**: Self-actualization
  - **East**: Krengjai
Happy People: What we Know

• Generally, people who perceive themselves to be “happy” live longer and have a more fulfilled life
• People are happier in feminine nations that are also economically affluent
Achieving Happiness

Diagram:
- Interdependent self-construal
  - Harmony belief
  - Feelings of social interaction
    - Happiness
- Independent self-construal
  - Control belief
Sue Combs
GIFT OF CHILDHOOD HAPPINESS  (Hallowell, 2002)

Connection  PLAY  Practice  Mastery  Recognition

Play – The Functions of Play – Medium for:
  • Expressing Feelings
  • Exploring Relationships
  • Describing Experiences
  • Disclosing Wishes
  • Achieving Self-fulfillment
Happiness Is

• At age 4 … not peeing in your pants
• At age 12 … having friends
• At age 16 … having a driver’s license
• At age 25 … having sex when married
• At age 35 … having money
• At age 50 … having money
• At age 60 … having sex when married
• At age 70 … having a driver’s license
• At age 75 … having friends
• At age 80 … not peeing in your pants
"Please be aware that any silver lining found within me may contain trace amounts of mercury."
Psychologists Ask:

• Why be happy?
  – Affective
  – Motivational
  – Behavioral
Psychologists Ask:

• Where is happiness and how can I get some/more happy??
  – Locus of control
  – Social comparison
  – Problem-focused coping
  – Affect regulation
Tim Ballard
What is happiness – biologically?

Levels of organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organism</td>
<td><em>Homo sapiens</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System</td>
<td>nervous system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organ</td>
<td>brain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tissue</td>
<td>nervous tissue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cell</td>
<td>neuron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemical</td>
<td>neurotransmitters and neuromodulators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>acetylcholine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>norepinephrine</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dopamine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>serotonin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>various neuropeptides</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is happiness – biologically?

Form follows function
Neuronal circuits
Neuronal communication = neurotransmitters

So where is happiness?

The limbic system?

cingulate gyrus
olfactory bulb
amygdala
hypothalamus
fornix
hippocampus
What is happiness – biologically?

Neuronal inputs and outputs

Raphe nuclei of brainstem

Locus ceruleus of reticular system

amygdala

Neurons release norepinephrine and serotonin onto neurons of the amygdala, promoting a sense of well-being … HAPINESS!
Thanks for your attention!
Now, let’s discuss this.