

Happiness and Fulfillment

"The pathos of man is that he hungers for personal fulfillment and for a sense of community with others."

... J. Saunders Redding (1906 - 1988) US historian and educator

In the western world, we seem to have a preoccupation with the pursuit of two things - money and happiness. Furthermore, we are constantly inundated with messages that suggest the way to have a happy life is through more wealth. Ironically, these messages are not aimed at making the listener happy rather the speaker wealthy.

Happiness is a topic that shows up regularly in the media as something we should be all be striving towards. Indeed, some countries have introduced the idea of "gross national happiness". Yet, should happiness be our goal?

Being happy is an emotion we experience in response to something we enjoy. So, on the surface, the pursuit of happiness seems like a worthwhile goal. Yet, what would happen if we follow this to its ultimate conclusion and be happy all the time?

Our emotions colour our world. They mark what we like and what we don't like. They inform us of what we should move towards and what might hurt us. They can tell us about what is really important to us. As such, our emotional responses are critical to the human way of navigating the world. So like being sad all the time and living in a depressed state, being happy all the time also blinds us to vital ways of interpreting what is happening for us. Too much happiness may blind us to the challenges and threats we sometimes face in life.

Now I am not trying to say that we should not seek to lead a happier life. That is a noble goal. However, it is useful to recognise that happier does not necessarily mean more complete. If we tend to focus solely on wanting to be happy, it is all too easy to reject other emotional responses such as sadness or anger as "bad". As such, we can shut out those responses and what they are telling us about ourselves and the world. Ultimately this can lead to a disconnection with the world and how we navigate it.

If we are to think about this in a different way, it is useful to start with the idea that our emotions are not a goal in and of themselves merely pointers along the journey of life. As such, our emotional responses represent an area of learning about ourselves and what is important to us.

In that context, rather than a goal of happiness, perhaps we could speak about a goal of fulfillment in life. A life where we recognise the richness and value of our emotional life and the role those emotions play in helping us live a full life. In looking at our pursuit of fulfilment, we can recognise life is not always about pleasure and sometimes the most fulfilling experiences are born of sadness or frustration.

"A lifetime of happiness: no man alive could bear it: it would be hell on earth."

... George Bernard Shaw (1856 - 1950) Irish dramatist and critic

Tommy Cooper...

Thanks for sending this through Greg.

Some one liners from comedian, Tommy Cooper. Enjoy!

Phone answering machine message - *"If you want to buy marijuana, press the hash key..."*

I went to buy some camouflage trousers the other day but I couldn't find any.

I went to the butchers the other day and I bet him 50 quid that he



couldn't reach the meat off the top shelf. He said, "No, the steaks are too high."

My friend drowned in a bowl of muesli. A strong currant pulled him in.

A man came round in hospital after a serious accident. He shouted, "Doctor, doctor, I can't feel my legs!" The doctor replied, "I know you can't, I've cut your arms off".

I went to a seafood disco last week and pulled a muscle.

Two Eskimos sitting in a kayak were chilly. They lit a fire in the craft, it sank, proving once and for all that you can't have your kayak and heat it.

Our ice cream man was found lying on the floor of his van covered with hundreds and thousands. Police say that he topped himself.

Man goes to the doctor, with a strawberry growing out of his head. Doc says, "I'll give you some cream to put on it."

"Doc I can't stop singing 'The Green, Green Grass of Home'". "That sounds like Tom Jones syndrome." "Is it common?" "It's not unusual."

What do you call a fish with no eyes? A fsh.

Police arrested two kids yesterday, one was drinking battery acid, and the other was eating fireworks. They charged one and let the other one off.

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Congratulations to Halle Yilmaz who won April's photo quote challenge and scored a seat at our June seminar, "Stop pointing the finger!" Her winning quote can be seen on our Facebook page - <http://tinyurl.com/86b4j24>.

If you are a photographer and would like to submit an original picture of yours for us to use in the competition email Jacqui at jchaplin@talkingabout.com.au.

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ACN 112 307 892
info@talkingabout.com.au
Telephone: +61 3 9504 3558

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