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The hidden power of smiling

What is relationship between smiling and happiness? Ron Gutman discusses the effects of smiling on your overall well-being. When he was young he wanted to be a superhero that could make people happy. Later he realized that happiness wasn't a super power and began to study smiling.

During research at UC Berkeley, Gutman found that smiling predicted students' success and well-being. In other study, baseball players who smiled in their pictures had longer life span than players who did not smile in their pictures

Smiling is the most basic expression of all humans. Gutman discovered that babies smile in the womb.

Smiling is an interesting expression. People cannot frown while smiling because smiling is contagious and blocks the facial muscles that control frowning. According the Charles Darwin's facial feedback response theory, smiling makes us feel happy.

Gutman tells us that smiling makes us appear more attractive and feel better. He says that just one smile has same effect as eating 2,000 chocolate bars. Additionally, smiling can make us healthier and live longer lives because it reduces the stress hormone cortisol. It increases dopamine and endorphins, which in turn reduce blood pressure. Want to live a longer happier life? Just smile!

Presenter: Ron Gutman
Video Date: March, 2011
Posted Date: May, 2011
Presentation Duration: 7:26



Link: http://www.ted.com/talks/ron_gutman_the_hidden_power_of_smiling.html

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The Happy Secret to Better Work...

Ever watched the evening news and noticed that most reports are negative? This is just one example of how negatively many people tend to see things. Shawn Achor explains that our happiness level is often based on how we view the world. Through adapting positive psychology practices in our daily lives, we can achieve more happiness.

Achor first relates a story from his childhood. One day he and his sister, Amy, were playing a game on top of their bunk beds. Amy fell off the bed on to the floor on all fours. Achor saw the look on her face and knew that she was about to cry. Before she had a chance to cry, Achor told her, "Did you see how you landed? No human lands on all fours like that. Amy I think you're a unicorn." Instead of crying, Amy happily climbed back up to the top bunk.

After Achor graduated from Harvard, he stayed on working in student dormitories. He saw that after the first week of classes, students were no longer feeling grateful and happy about their success of being admitted to Harvard. Instead, students were focused on hassles, stress, and heavy workloads. Achor says that 90% of our future happiness is dependent on how we look at the world around us.

Achor explains that practicing positive psychology can increase our happiness. In turn, we will be more intelligent, creative, and work better. He suggests tools to being practicing positive psychology: gratitude, journaling positive experiences, exercise, and meditation.

Presenter: Shawn Achor
Video Date: May, 2011
Posted Date: February, 2012
Presentation Duration: 12:21



Link: http://www.ted.com/talks/shawn_achor_the_happy_secret_to_better_work.html

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Choice, happiness and spaghetti sauce

Variety is the spice of life. People have different proclivities and many choices give us the opportunity to get exactly what we want. As an example Malcolm Gladwell recounts Howard Moskowitz's story. Howard is the man responsible for today's many choices in the grocery store.

First, Howard was hired by Pepsi to create the perfect sweetness level for Diet Pepsi. He failed to find one. He insisted that there was not one perfect Diet Pepsi but many good sweetness levels for Diet Pepsi. Howard was fired by Pepsi and then hired by Ragu. At the Ragu, he applied what he had learned at Pepsi and invented many different kinds of spaghetti sauce. The business was incredible success. Based on Howard's ideas, other food industries began to produce more variety. One example is Grey Poupon.

Gladwell points out that "people do not know what they want" and "the mind knows not what the tongue wants." Howard discovered that extra-chunky spaghetti sauce was the most popular, but at the time nobody knew that that was what they wanted. Gladwell says that there is no one perfect product or flavor because everyone is different and it one thing will not satisfy all of us. Gladwell ends his talk saying, "In embracing the diversity of human beings, we will find a surer way to true happiness."

Presenter: Malcolm Gladwell
Video Date: February, 2004
Posted Date: September, 2012
Presentation Duration: 17:34



Link: http://www.ted.com/talks/malcolm_gladwell_on_spag_hetti_sauce.html

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How to Buy Happiness ...

Many people and religious groups repeat the adage “Money can’t buy happiness.” But Michael Norton tells us differently, “If you think money can’t buy happiness, you aren’t spending it right.”

Norton talks first about how people traditionally think about money. Look at lottery winners. Most people think that if they win the lottery, they will be over the moon. However, the opposite is usually true. Norton explains that typical lottery winners spend all of their money and go into debt. On top of that, friends often beg lottery winners for money, ruining their social network.

The right way to spend your money is on other people. Norton’s first study was at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. College students received envelopes of five or twenty dollars. The envelopes included instructions to either spend the money on themselves or on someone else. At the end of the day, Norton called the students and asked how happy they felt. Students who spent money on someone else were significantly happier, while students who spent money on themselves felt no different.

Norton did the same experiment with sales teams and dodge ball teams. He found the same results with these groups. Both the sales teams and dodge ball teams benefited from spending money on each other. So, if you want to increase your happiness, buy something for a friend or donate to charity!

Presenter: Michael Norton
Video Date: November, 2011
Posted Date: April, 2012
Presentation Duration: 10:59



Link: http://www.ted.com/talks/michael_norton_how_to_buy_happiness.html

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The paradox of choice

Barry Schwartz began his talk with a discussion about the “official dogma” adopted by all western industrial societies. The official dogma indicates that maximizing individual freedom means maximizing welfare and choice. But too many choices cause confusion.

In supermarkets, we have endless salad dressing choices. In an electronics store, we can choose a stereo amongst a slew of stereo systems. When purchasing a cell phone, there are hundreds of options.

Too many choices isn't just an issue when purchasing products but also in selecting health services. When we go to see a doctor, the doctor asks to us what kind treatment or drugs we want. As patients, we ask to the doctor what the best choice among the treatments is because we do not know about them. However, we need to make the decision.

We have many choices to make in our lives about marriage, having children, and jobs. Schwartz says, “Life is matter of choice”. When we should be enjoying ourselves we are often thinking about other choices we could have made. Too many choices cause three negative effects; paralysis, opportunity cost, and escalation of expectations. People want to make the best decisions. However, many options often prevent us from making a decision.

Presenter: Barry schwartz

Video Date: July, 2005

Posted Date: September, 2006

Presentation Duration: 19:37



Link: http://www.ted.com/talks/barry_schwartz_on_the_paradox_of_choice.html

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The Surprising Science of Happiness...

Didn't get that new job? Don't worry; it likely won't affect your happiness. Dan Gilbert argues that we aren't always unhappy when we don't get what we want. In fact, our brains create something he calls "synthetic happiness." "Synthetic happiness is every bit as real and enduring as the kind of happiness you stumble upon when you get exactly what you were aiming for."

In an example, Gilbert looks at news stories. Moreese Brickham was absolved from his crime at age 78. After his release he was quoted saying "I don't have one minute's regret. It was a glorious experience." Pete Best, original drummer for the Beatles said, "I am happier than I would have been with the Beatles."

Lastly, Gilbert talks about the "free choice paradigm." He explains that people are actually happier when they receive fewer choices and are stuck with their final choice. Gilbert discusses a photography class where one group of students can change their mind about the photo they take home. The other group is stuck with the first choice they make. He finds that the group that is stuck with their photo is happier with their choice in the long run.

Through several examples and studies, Gilbert proves that happiness isn't dependent on whether we get what we want. We may be disappointed when we don't get that job or do well on a test, but we get over it and manufacture synthetic happiness.

Presenter: Dan Gilbert
Video Date: February, 2004
Posted Date: September, 2006
Presentation Duration: 21:20



Link: http://www.ted.com/talks/dan_gilbert_asks_why_are_we_happy.html

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