



## How to Create & Maintain a Healthy Perspective in Work & Life: The Pursuit of Happiness



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Dennis Prager, in his text *Happiness is a Serious Problem*, emphasized that "There is little correlation between the circumstances of people's lives and how happy they are". He identified three key stumbling blocks to happiness:

- ~ Comparison with others: Always trying to keep up or surpass others in your life (a.k.a. "Keeping up with the Jones!")
- ~ Images of perfection: How we THINK life should be. This is often warped by the media influences including television, internet and print.
- ~ The missing tile syndrome: The tendency is fixate on what is missing in life instead of the many positive aspects of your life. With the missing tile, you either need to obtain it, replace it or forget it.

Other keys to happiness include:

- ~ An attitude of gratitude: learning to appreciate the blessings in life
- ~ An understanding that happiness is a "by-product" of something else...it doesn't just happen, we have to "work" at our happiness
- ~ A belief that our life has a greater meaning (spiritual or religious faith)

There are no guarantees of happiness in our life, but certain guidelines will at least move us in the right direction. Previous research on happiness (Zelinski, 2004) suggests that the factors most people associate with happiness are money, status, beauty and social prominence. Interestingly, none of these factors were linked to happiness.

Illionois researcher and psychologist Dr. Edward Diener studied retirees who report to be happy in life. He concluded that money may add pleasure to life, but it does not bring about happiness. The latter is brought about more from self-respect, accomplishment and satisfaction.

Similarly, Layard (2003) suggests that despite the tremendous increase in affluence in the west over the past fifty years, people are no happier. This is not true in poor countries where happiness does increase when people get richer.

Ben Franklin said the following about money: "Money never made a man happy yet nor will it. There is nothing in its nature to produce happiness. The more a man has, the more he wants. Instead of filling a vacuum, it creates one."

Consider the following elements of happiness that money cannot buy: health, personal creativity, satisfaction, character, wisdom, friends, reputation, sense of humore, patience, warmth, time, love, achievement, respect, leisure, emotional stability, physical fitness, spiritual fulfillment and courage (Zelinski, 2004, p.203).

### References

Prager, D. (1998). *Happiness is a serious problem*. Harper/Collins: New York.

Zelinski, EJ., (2004) *How to retire wild, happy, and free: Retirement wisdom that you won't get from your financial advisor*. Ten Speed Press: Berkeley/Toronto.

### Points to Ponder

- ~ The greater part of our happiness or misery depends on our dispositions and not our circumstances. - Martha Washington
- ~ Now is not the time to think of what you do not have. Think of what you can do with what there is. - Ernest Hemingway
- ~ Wealth is having money: prosperity is enjoying it.
- ~ It is better to live rich than to die rich.
- ~ If you have one eye on yesterday, and one eye on tomorrow, you are going to be cockeyed today. - Unknown, wise person.