

The secret of happiness



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Nevertheless, was Richard Cowry really happy? HIS happiness was concluded by bystanders, not himself. All he used to possess just met those people's standard of happiness, whereas what he wanted and what his criteria of happiness could not be known. Actually, Richard Cowry might be unhappy which caused his extreme action to end his own life, despite he owned many precious things that common people were eager for. Although the content of happiness varies from person to person, the definition of happiness can be demonstrated as a sense derived from satisfaction, which is to fulfill one's self-expectation.

To emphasize, in this definition. The expectation is one's own demand rather than others' or social desirability.

Taking Richard Cowry as an example, bystanders considered him happy because his properties and characteristics were accorded with their demands, which usually were social expectation. But that would not compose Richards happiness. The true happiness only can be constructed basing on one's desire. The first correlation between self-expectation and happiness depends on the expectation itself. People with low-expectation are easier to feel happy than those with high- expectation when other conditions are equal.

Arthur C. Brooks, author of "A Formula for Happiness", states that conservative women are particularly blissful (about 40 percent say they are very happy) and that makes them slightly happier than conservative men and significantly happier than liberal women; the unhappiest of all are liberal men with only about a fifth considering themselves very happy (Web). It is

reasonable to assume that conservative people have lower expectations than liberal people since their self-expectations usually consist with their current situations, both of which are influenced by their continuous culture.

Liberal people, however, are chasing something that are often up above the existing and universal social conditions.

Because the status quo can not service them at a large margin, liberalizes have to strive for what they want. In terms of the gender difference, men are generally setting higher expectation regarding Income, career achievements and social status than women are. That makes men have a longer distance to arrive the destination of their goals. Here is another example about the level of self- expectation: Gerald is a doctor.

He is in his mid-40s.

He had a thriving practice. He lived in a beautiful home. He had enough money saved to live comfortably for the rest of his life. Or so he thought. Unfortunately for Gerald, he was friends with a very well thought of financial genius named Bernard Maddox.

... Gerald trusted him so much And now it's all gone. His house, his retirement, all his money. " let's very depressing," said Gerald, " I worked so hard for so long to build my practice.

So I could provide for my family, so I could retire and travel. And now it's all gone. Decades of hard work flushed down the toilet.

I'm tired. I can't sleep. And I'm angry.

Why is this villain, this crook, this Maddox, still living high on the hog, in his palace? He should be in Jail. Getting stepped by big angry criminals. I guess though, I've always known, in the end I have no one to blame but myself.

And that makes me depressed. " Carla Crandall is in her early ass. She suffers from mental illness, and she is a recovering drug addict.

She lives on a fixed income from Social Security because she is disabled, and lives in one of the nastiest neighborhoods in America. She's been depressed for years.

Her income hasn't changed at all. She has no retirement. She has no home. She has no money to invest.

She didn't lose one single penny during this catastrophic crash. Steers) This story is cited from David Henry Setters editorial " Poor People Happier Than Rich People for the First Time in History', which was issued in 2009. Steers claimed that " this is because the lifestyle of poor people has barely changed with the economic downturn. They were below the poverty before, and they're below the poverty level now' (Web).

On the other hand, many rich people have never been poor.

They have no idea about how hard it is to be an American without money while most poor people, having been poor most of their lives, are very used to it. This can be, again, explained by the self- expectation theory. People living in poverty have low expectations. They never virtually use whether they could purchase a fancy house or cruise ship, which rich people may do, to measure their life satisfaction.

Nevertheless, when the rich who used to own these luxuries lose even only one piece of their high-value properties, they fall below the previous expectation, and feel very unhappy.

The second correlation relies on the ability to fulfill expectations. People with stronger abilities to realize their dreams are easier to feel happy when other conditions are equal. Steve Marabous said “ Happiness is not the absence of problems but the ability to deal with hem.

” Truly, there are numerous obstacles on the way of fulfilling expectations and getting happiness. If one has the ability to solve these problems, removing these barriers, he or she will reach the goal more quickly compared with those who are stopped by the obstacles.

Considering another reasonable assumption that these abilities can be reflected on individual income or work achievement, there are some statistic evidences supporting this correlation. In 2005, Robert Frank argued that when we plot average happiness versus income for clusters of people in a given entry at a given time, we see that rich people are in fact much happier than poor people. Justine Howlers, author of “ Are Rich People Happier than Poor People? “, verified this argument using the data from the 2006 survey.

By comparing rich and poor people, he estimated a happiness-income gradient that has a slope that is similar to what has been seen when comparing rich and poor countries (Howlers). Just like individual, rich countries have advantageous competitiveness and high productivities, which can be regarded as stronger abilities. For the aspect of work achievement, Brooks claims that the secret to happiness through work is earned success.

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Americans who feel they are successful at work are twice as likely to say they persist after controlling for income and other demographics.

Furthermore, Brooks illustrates this kind of success with his experience:

When I taught graduate students, I noticed that social entrepreneurs who pursued nonprofit careers were some of my happiest graduates.

They made less money than many of their classmates, but were no less certain that they were earning their success. They defined that success in non-monetary terms and delighted in it. (Brooks) Although success in work also mean different things for different people, once they set up the goal, the abilities play an critical role.

The stronger abilities they have, the more career achievements they get, and the more happiness they harvest. The last correlation is about the attitude towards the process of fulfilling the expectation. People who are optimistic for their expectations are easier to feel happy than those who are unconfined about reaching the goals.

All the feelings and attitudes can be roughly categorized into optimistic style and pessimistic style. Martin Seligman, a pioneer of the Positive Psychology movement, describes optimism s an “ explanatory style”, a way in which people make sense of life and the world.

He asserts that “ an optimistic person will see and respond to life in a largely positive way, mostly taking a positive view of matters and events, looking for the positive in most circumstances, seeing the glass half-full’ rather than otherwise, readily looking ‘ on the bright side of life’. ” Seligman suggests

this way of approaching life has many benefits over the alternative, having a ' pessimistic' explanatory style, and is indeed the basis for living happier (Web). People with optimistic style have the following attitudes: a. Slides setbacks or failures but sees them as temporary and capable of and learning from " I'll plan better and things will go better next time"; recovering b.

Views setbacks or failures as " specific" (to do with one aspect of life) and never complete disaster" (not a sign of general incompetence); c. Doesn't enjoy not getting something right, but sees it as part of the bigger of personal ability and achievement in many other areas. (Salesman) picture Therefore, the people with these attitudes have felt a fraction of happiness before reaching the goal because they believe that they can ultimately make it.

Actually, on the other hand, the attitude will influence their behaviors.

Optimistic people will keep overcoming all difficulties to fulfill their expectations rather than feel frustrated and pause their steps as pessimistic people do. That is also why the pessimists cannot enjoy the final achievement and the happiness. To conclude, the secret of happiness is to set up a proper self-expectation, improve the ability to accomplish the expectation, and keep optimistic about the process of fulfilling the expectation. People may change, surrounding situations may change, and expectations may change.

The secret of happiness, however, never changes.