

The futile pursuit of happiness



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In Search of Happiness: Resistance is not Futile In Jon Gertners article d " The Futile Pursuit of Happiness" the author reports on the work of psychologists who contend that people continually overestimate their happiness or sorrow from future events. The article puts forth the notion that by misjudging the importance of our choices, we make decisions that are not always in our best interest. This reflects in the cars we buy, the jobs we seek, and the ways that we react to disappointment and loss. The article is a report on the study of our decision-making processes and sterilizes the human nature that adds the unpredictability that makes our life more interesting.

There is a lot of truth in the article. Gertner states that we, "... will adapt to a pleasurable event and make it the backdrop of our lives". We see this everyday through our own lives. Children will quickly discard and neglect the Christmas toys that they had anxiously waited a month to receive. The toy does not have the lifespan or the energy of the anticipation for it. People buy a new car and soon find that the newness has worn off. Just as the glitter wears away from the Christmas toys, so does the grief from a tragic loss. Its easy to think you will never find a job as good as the one that just laid you off, but people are almost always pleasantly surprised by lifes fortunes.

The mistake we often make in judging the happiness that we will receive from a given decision or event is generally due to our misunderstanding of where happiness lies. We may be unhappy due to our limited income. The thought of winning the lottery seems like it would make us ecstatic beyond belief. However, by logical examination, it would in all likelihood only result in greater unhappiness. If a modest amount of money made us unhappy, a large sum may make us miserable. How many of the things that make us unhappy could be changed with only money? The bills may be paid, but the

underlying reasons for our unhappiness would persist.

The author points out that we can train our emotions and in doing so make more rational decisions. A cooling off period to prevent buyers remorse may be rational, but it removes the excitement of making a new purchase.

Analyzing our potential for happiness based on laboratory rationale takes away our propensity for risk. It reduces our courage and limits our innovation and invention. While it may be a practical approach to making decisions, it precludes the human nature of emotion.

Evaluating our predicted happiness and basing our decisions on a calculated outcome may be more practical than basing our actions on a more emotional state. There is no doubt our judgment is usually clouded when we estimate how happy we will be by a decision. When the initial newness is gone, our new car may become just one more discarded Christmas toy. Still, we cant adequately measure our happiness or always know the source of our unhappiness. To attempt to do so robs us of our most basic characteristic, human nature. The loss of emotional input on our decisions would leave a sterilized life where there was once innovation and excitement.

Works Cited

Gertner, Jon. " The Futile Pursuit of Happiness." . 7 Sep. 2003. 25 Mar. 2007 .