

# Individualism and happiness

[Experience](#), [Happiness](#)



Pursuit of Happiness Happiness is not one thing; it means different things in different places, different societies, and different cultural contexts. There are multiple "pursuits of happiness". It's impossible to define "happiness". It's left to each of us to define what "happiness" is. Happiness cannot be achieved in minutes it comes from the pursuit of happiness, Working towards and achieving goals. Pursuit of happiness differs from person to person and from culture to culture. Diener and his colleagues (Diener et al. 2003) believe life evaluations are important to the quality of life in all societies because it is hard to imagine either a good life or a good society without a positive sense of SWB (positive psychology pg 114). However, they argue that every culture has set values, and goals that people use to evaluate their happiness. Culture refers to beliefs, social norms, religious background, these characteristics shared by people in a place and time for everyday existence. Understanding the culture differences will allow you to understand the differences in of happiness.

For the most part each culture has certain values and goals that are looked upon to be the acceptable norm for happiness and that is how happiness is measures. The media, parents, schools, peers influence the way people think, act, and feel towards a successful life. The general population that surrounds you influences people's ideas about the meaning of happiness and how to achieve it. Comparing the traditional American perspective on happiness with the traditional Asian perspective on happiness, by cultural and historical factors that contribute to happiness.

Americans are individualistic culture which means the people are primary focus is that of themselves and their immediate families. In contrast to

Asians, which are, collectivistic cultures, where the members are concerned more with the well being of the group rather than their own well-being. On average, people living in wealthy nations are happier than those living in less wealthy nations. The United States is near the top of the income measure, 6th in life satisfaction. Japanese like and have high income, but only moderate in subjective well-being.

China ranks very low on income measure and higher than Japanese in subjective well being measure. Over the past 25 years, history of international surveys have not changed the ranking have been quite stable. | Asia collectivist culture characteristics traits: \* Each person is encouraged to be an active player in society, to do what is best for society as a whole rather than themselves. \* The rights of families, communities, and the collective supersede those of the individual. \* Rules promote unity, brotherhood, and selflessness. Working with others and cooperating is the norm; everyone supports each other. \* As a community, family or nation more than as an individual. \* United States Individualism cultures characteristics traits: \* " I" identity. \* Promotes individual goals, initiative and achievement. \* Individual rights are seen as being the most important. Rules attempt to ensure self-importance and individualism. \* Independence is valued; there is much less of a drive to help other citizens or communities than in collectivism. \* Relying or being dependent on others is frequently seen as shameful. People are encouraged to do things on their own, to rely on themselves. \* The stereotype of a 'good person' in collectivist cultures is trustworthy, honest, generous, and sensitive, all characteristics that are helpful to people working in groups. In contrast, a 'good person' in individualist cultures is more

assertive and strong, characteristics helpful for competing. Asian members rate happiness and life satisfaction on the lower end of the scale. They do not think of their life as being happy or sad, satisfying or dissatisfying it just is what it is.

Believing emotional feelings are temporary they live in the now rather than wanting more for tomorrow. In Asian cultures, regard how others view you and necessary related to how they view themselves. Positive feelings occur when pleasing others, fulfilling social expectations. Achieving goals that enhance interdependence is directly related to happiness in collectivist cultures. For Americans positive feelings are strongly related to goal achievement. Achieving goals enhances our independence giving us a sense of pride and accomplishment.

That feeling is important to Americans in reaching happiness promoting mutual trust and support in relationships is directly related to happiness and well being within the Asian culture. In individualistic cultures, a shared belief in the importance of feeling good about oneself promotes self-enhancement and social exchanges characterized by mutual approval and praise. Considering the wide ranging influence of culture on peoples feelings, thought, and behaviors (Markus ; amp; Kitayama, 1991), different types of persuasive messages may very well influence people differently in cultures as distinct as north America and east Asia.