

# Richard a. friedman essay



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RHT 101 March 2nd 2012 Richard A. Friedman The article Born to Be Happy, Through a Twist of Human Hard Wire by Richard A Friedman addresses both psychiatric and scientific aspects of physiological disorders. The main concern of this article is to explain what makes individuals happy or obtain happiness and also explaining how psychiatric illnesses alter their happiness. Friedman's main disorder explained is a temperament disorder called hyperthymia a mental illness that is rare in America.

Friedman's definition of hyperthymia states, " Constant joyous temperament, energetic and productive and are often the envy of all who know them because they don't have to work at it" (Friedman par 3). Prior to this definition Richard provides two of his own personal experiences of women who are diagnosed with hyperthymia. The women both state quotes on their personal feelings about having this disorder, both in a sense feel that it is quite embarrassing being happy all the time especially for no good reason, which makes the reader stop and think to themselves why would anyone not want that?

Making the reader want to continue reading the article to find out how to obtain happiness without trying for their own wellbeing. The stories also give the reader a visual description and better understanding of a hyperthymic person making it informative to even readers that may have no knowledge about science. Only having a small article space in the New York Times, and not a full essay to explain this topic in detail along with other related illnesses.

The other key disorder explained is the main reason for hyperthymia being so abnormal and such limited knowledge. About three percent of American adults suffer from dysthymia (Friedman par 3), a disorder that deals with unbalanced chemicals in the brain resulting in mild depression. Friedman intelligently describes dysthymia as “ hyperthymia’s dark twin” (Friedman par 4) which immediately the reader implies that it’s the opposite of all that was just explained about hyperthymia.

Friedman having a psychiatric background and have much knowledge about the two disorders he concluded that since ninety percent of dysthymic people experience episodes of a more severe depression in their lifetimes, than must a hyprethymic person have some mood disorders, too(Friedman par 5)? Bipolar disorder, as described by Friedman “ a roller coaster of depressive troughs and manic peaks” (Friedman par 5). Richard is incredibly good at taking a terms definition and relating it to an idea that only takes common sense to understand.

By definition “ bipolar disorder is a psychiatric disorder characterized by extreme mood swings, ranging between episodes of acute euphoria mania and severe depression” (Encarta dictionary). He took the definition and made an imagery of it that connects with all common knowledge. Richard article also sets up great transitions to topic to topic. Which when the reader gets to the end may have them thinking how did I get on this topic? The ease into a new topic was smooth, and had the read move to the experimental reasoning that Richard had discovered. Paragraphs six and seven have loaded pack information and detail.

All in two small paragraphs he touches on the ideas of humors neurotransmitters, what role serotonin and dopamine play as chemicals of the brain, and how antidepressants work, how long they take. As he ends paragraph six with a rhetorical question “ if lifelong depressive state like dysthymia can be erased in some cases with medication, is it possible then to make a person better than well, let’s say hyperthymic (Friedman par 6)? Friedman first starts to explain in paragraph seven how recreational drugs such as cocaine and ecstasy affect depression levels in the brain.

Concluding all recreational drug effects will disappear sooner or later for any human that has taken them, due to the homeostatic mechanisms of our brains. Richard does not explain the meaning of homeostatic mechanism but if he would have the reader could have better understood how recreational drugs work only for a short length of time and would have been easier to compare the effects of antidepressants and why they take weeks to work but maintain their homeostasis for long periods of time or even may cure the depression all together.

Then making the assumption that the brain is all about stability and equality, homeostatic is the key term to understand the whole problem he is explaining throughout the text. A person without knowledge about science would have difficulty putting those two paragraphs together. Their after to answer his own question of the probability of being more than well was answered by the research Richard found conducted by Dr. Brian Knutson at the University of California at San Francisco.

The test done by normal volunteers looked at the effects of serotonin enhancing antidepressants Paxil and Placebo. Neither the volunteers nor the researchers knew who took what, just was assigned to observe the actions of all and later compare. Knutson's results later stated by Friedman " Compared with the placebo, Paxil reduced hostile feelings and slightly increased social affliction. But Paxil did not make the normal people any happier" (Friedman par 8).

And now again brings up the idea of homeostatic mechanisms because the brain not going way over its required levels of dopamine because the brain's main goal is to reach homeostasis. Richards conclusion paragraph does not really sum up the text, but he states a couple rhetorical questions and then finishes up with the statement " But hyperthymic people have it easy: they have won the temperamental sweepstakes and may be hard-wired for happiness" (Friedman par 9).

This leaves the reader with no actual answers just all their own individual meaning of the entire article. Hard-wired for happiness essentially has to do with happiness coming from biochemical neurotransmitters at birth rather than people thinking they need to obtain happiness for themselves. As a reader this article was very interesting but Friedman's conclusion is quite depressing if you look at it this way, all others not born with hyperthymia lost life's race, and now along with all other struggles life throws at us, somewhere happiness needs to be fit in.

All our life we have to work hard to find what makes us truly happy while some Americans just get it handed to them at birth, is that fair? And

throughout the article explain how no drugs can make a person as stable as a hyperthymic person, seems just to be concluding you can work and achieve happiness but there will always be people in this world happier.

Work Cited Axelrod, Rise B. , and Charles Raymond Cooper. " Chapter 4/  
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