

The Pursuit of Happiness

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We all want to be happy, right? This is the ultimate goal. And most of us know what it would take to make our worlds complete. We worry and talk about it every day. When you stress out over a test, what you may be thinking is, “If only I did well in school, I could be happy.” Or when you focus on how much you hate your thighs, you might believe deep down that if you had the perfect body you would be happy.

Perhaps you think that you won’t truly be happy until you achieve your fantasy lifestyle - when you have met the love of your life, are working in your dream career, living in your dream house, and driving your dream car. You may believe that you can’t be fully happy until you have these things. Don’t be surprised if you recognize some of these beliefs as your own; lots of people operate under similar assumptions.

So, where on earth did we get these ideas about what it takes to be happy? Probably, from a variety of sources. Maybe your family had expectations for you that you picked up on over the years. Perhaps your friends reinforced your ideas about what would make you happy. And, let’s not forget the messages that we get constantly from movies, magazines, television shows, and advertisements. Media sources send powerful messages that we must be thin, gorgeous, flawless, successful, and wealthy in order to be truly happy. We live in a world where images of “perfection” are everywhere and businesses profit when we believe that we need to

buy their products in order to be happy. Many of us have taken these messages to heart. Is it time to question these assumptions?

When we stop to think about it, we know that the key to happiness is not this simple. True fulfillment will never come from a Prada handbag or from owning a Mercedes or living in a fancy house. Rock solid relationships will always serve you better than rock hard abs. Having a reasonable amount of money may make life easier in many ways, but money will never buy happiness. And neither will beauty or perfection, for that matter. We all have imperfections and vulnerabilities as well as strengths and unique aspects to our personalities that should be accepted and shared.

Fortunately, you have a great deal of control over your fate. Certain choices that you make may promote happiness, while other choices that you make may be preventing you from being as happy as you could be. Ask yourself this: are you reasonably comfortable with yourself or do you tend to hold yourself up to unattainable standards? Do you spend enough time developing and maintaining satisfying relationships with important people in your life? Are you passionate about your major? Are you preparing to find work that is interesting and meaningful? Do you spend time each day doing something that you enjoy? Do you take care of your body and your health? Are you able to see the glass as half full rather than half empty? Finally, are you racing to get to a fantasy destination or are you enjoying your life's journey along the way?