

A Short Guide To Living A Happy, And Meaningful Life –

What Steve Jobs, Apple, & 1,780
People, Teach Us About
Happiness

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Dedicated

To my biological Father.

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Overture: Happiness Is The Mirage

I seek one thing most: Happiness.

It hangs in the air like a bird in the sky. I can see it but I can't reach it. I step out every day

with the sole desire to capture it. I ponder on and try out several ways to do this, but it keeps eluding me...

I am out for the day again, and there are other people like me – others who want happiness too. I and the others race like terrified mischief for our lives. If it isn't for our lives, what are we racing for?

We stand cramped up at the transport terminal waiting for our turn to board the train. The train finally comes, but it is cramped up. Only one passenger was willing to alight the train that came from Nowhere and was headed back to Nowhere. But I don't care. I jumped on the train, replacing him. The train puffed away, along with me and the other passengers to Nowhere.

Nowhere, it seems, is a city. A city inundated with mesmeric things – cars, clothes, drugs, entertainment, discounts, and freebies. I spot an irresistible offer. I join the waiting line - impatient for the salesman to open the store so we can grab whatever we could at a lower price. We know he is exasperated, but we don't care.

The moment the door swung open, we started pouring in, not minding if we might trample him. We were fighting for the limited stocks after all.

I acquired myself something nice, but at what cost? I had bitten off someone's arms and trampled someone to a pulp. Wasn't that too expensive?

I had been excited about it, but right now I'm not. It doesn't feel as it used to. Am I still happy about what I got? Am I satisfied?

No!

I desire something else: maybe a new car. I'm sure, if I got a red Ferrari, I will be pretty happy for the rest of my life. After all, everyone who rides a Ferrari is happy, right?

Right?!

I got the Ferrari, but I can't deal with this traffic.

I gaze at my luxury watch which I had gotten from the store earlier. It cost quite a fortune but only tells the same time as every other ordinary watch. All the expensive ticking succeeds in doing is reminding me that I'm running out of time.

I am still trapped with everyone else in this city. And as the time ticks on, bills pile up, my anxiety climbs, and I grow despondent.

Slowly I fall into the depths of depression.

I seek comfort in drinks, but the happiness it brews is only momentary. It wanes away.

So I find a new source: Happy Pills.

My god!!! I am in paradise. Everything and everywhere is pretty and sparkly like Eden. With rainbows dancing in my lucid vision, I am sure I have finally touched happiness. Finally!

What's that thing they say about rainbow again?

It begins to fade away: the green turns grey, and the blue becomes pale; as the rainbow turns to lightning, and the mild dew becomes a storm.

I fall from grace without a Hell to at least land. Was this all an illusion? Is it truly impossible to be happy? Has the demon of sadness returned with its kindred spirits? Is this the end?

I manage to recover from the downward spiral with my sanity still intact.

Perhaps if I sought after "the root of all evil" and planted it for myself, I could enjoy its abundance. Perhaps if I had money, I could buy a perpetual illusion of happiness.

I'm now planting the Tree by working a job I hate. I hope this isn't another mistake

I hope that it buys me happiness this time.

I hope...

Overture By Ubere Emmanuel

A DJ And Creative Writer

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Part 1: What really makes people happy?

You want to be [happy](#), right? Me too. But there's a problem. Happiness is fickle (at best), volatile, and illusionary (at worse) – it is here, and then it is not – it always seems to be around the next corner, only to vanish once we get there – fading away as soon as we reach out to grapple it. But why?

I've read, and heard, a lot of smart and wise people say a lot about humans, and what makes them happy. A lot of them claim that humans do not know what would make them happy (and that is why very few people are happy, and those few aren't happy at all times either).

For most people, happiness is simple, or so they think. They assume they can attain happiness once they get something they crave – it may be [money](#), [love](#), power, or something else. This is what they believe would make them happy. Yet, this simplicity is hardly reflected in reality. In reality, what most people think would bring them happiness often brings them more misery – consider a glutton or an addict – it always seems to be that happiness eludes them (and even transform into pain) as soon as they grab it. But, humans being humans never seem to learn; there is always that drive to achieve (or get more of) something that feels good... or maybe it is because of the little taste of that goodness (i.e. happiness) which keeps them going back...

[Steve Jobs](#) was famous for stating that "People don't know what they want until you show it to them. That's why I never rely on market research...".

He wasn't off the mark. In fact, he hit the bullseye: In psychology, there is something known as impact bias. It refers to our tendency to overestimate (in our predictions) how much, and how long we would feel a certain way about a certain emotion. That said, carrying out a market survey and asking people who (by nature) do not know what they are talking about may just be a waste of money and time. Happiness could be very hard to define – but you can, if you do your due diligence (thankfully, you're reading this).

Interestingly, when you look at the results (of Steve Jobs's way of thinking), you'd realize that his company – [Apple](#) – has actually brought happiness to the lives of billions of people (despite their counterintuitive approach). Needless to say, it has always been with things no one was expecting – I'm talking about the iPod, iPhone, Mac, and Ear Pods. You were happy the day you got your new iPhone, right? Right?!

Well, if he – Steve Jobs – knew people were terrible at knowing what makes them happy but was still able to make them happy nonetheless, it tells us something about the nature of happiness:

It tells us that (maybe) happiness is not what people think. Maybe it is a little different. And maybe, with the right knowledge, happiness can be synthesized – as Steve Jobs's company (Apple) has demonstrated with their line of products (we would talk about this soon) – and even manipulated - as has been demonstrated by addicts (we would talk about this later as well)

But that doesn't answer the question of “how to be happy”; neither did it exactly do justice to the definition of “happiness” in the first place. It only insinuated that Steve Jobs's products made people happy; thereby, proposing (the hypothesis) that **getting nice things (like an iPhone) makes people happy...**

But is that assumption even correct? and is there really a way to find happiness in life?

Understanding Happiness – [Why Is Measuring Happiness Difficult?]

The thing is, all humans are alike, pretty much how all birds on a farm are alike.

Now, that may sound weird to you, or maybe even derogatory. You might say, “we are all different. No two persons are the same. Different things make different people happy in different ways. And don't ever compare me to a chicken, ever”. And I understand you, but

please hear me out. The thing is, even the thousands of birds in a poultry farm are all different in a way, yet they have qualities that are fundamentally alike – it is the fundamentals I am referring to, not the looks, or even species – it is the humanity, not the race, or gender.

For example, we know for a fact that hens are dumber than dogs. It is a whole lot easier to rear a thousand chickens than it is to rear two hundred dogs. It is also a whole lot easier to rear Snails than it is to rear chickens. I'm not talking about the cost of feeding, but rather your ability to understand what motivates them, and use that knowledge to predict their behaviors, and ultimately dominate them.

Unlike dogs, chickens or snails don't think about play. They only think about food and mating. And if you can supply them with those, they would have zero need to escape – they would be fundamentally “happy” where they are (because they are getting all their needs met)

This is the reason we can rear cattle and sheep too. They are happy to be domesticated. They don't want to run off into the wild – where they would struggle to find food, and risk being eaten by predators. They are happy being with us (humans).

It may surprise you, but it is also the principle governing your happiness (or lack thereof).

Unlike dogs that need sunlight, walks, and all those other “dog needs”, humans have their needs, though they are more nuanced (i.e. complex, subtle, or difficult to make sense of, at least, to other humans).

Think of it this way. Every living thing is motivated by something – usually [self-preservation](#). That is to say, every living thing wants to be alive as long as possible, and also to enjoy that life while it lasts. Hence, living things are always after things that would either extend their lives – like food, and sex – or things that would make their lives comfortable or, at least, free from danger – like shelter and defense mechanisms.

For instance, ants work all the days of their (short) lives, searching for food – tracking down sugar cubes, grains, and even other dead

insects. Then they carry the food into their shelter – an anthill, which is surprisingly large for its size, and almost as impressive as our skyscrapers considering their level of intelligence. These tiny creatures also happen to have very effective and equally impressive defense mechanism – Fire ants, for example, clamp down on their enemies (or your skin) with their sharp mandible, then spurt an acidic venom over it, which effectively kills the enemy (or in our case, itches and burns for quite a while); most times they cooperate together as an “emergence” to build structures, gather food, attack enemies/threats. They do all these to achieve their goal – which is, self-preservation.

Basically, when living things get the “things” they want, they would be happy where they are (even if it requires cooperating and sharing with others, just like in the case of ants), and if they don’t they would seek to get it elsewhere – because they would not be happy.

Lower organisms require fewer things to be happy, whilst the higher organisms require more things to be happy (as explained earlier)

Unfortunately for humans, we are the highest beings on the planet (in terms of consciousness or [intelligence](#)), which means we desire and crave the most amount of things to be happy.

But it gets more complicated. This is because needing more isn’t always about numbers, but also about quality and value. The problem is, **quality and value are not always objective (this is why measuring happiness is difficult)**...in fact, they are most times subjective, and this makes everything humans need very weird – for animals, other humans, aliens, and probably even the gods.

Novelty – [What Does It Mean To Be Happy?]

We know for a fact that every living thing needs food. But not every living thing needs a mate or even shelter. But when it comes to humans, we need more than just food, shelter, sex, and defense mechanisms...we also need abstract things like meaning and purpose.

Things like meaning and purpose don't even have any tangible measures; so how do you even start wrapping your head around that – something without a color, shape, or even number? (I would talk more about this shortly).

Following the Steve Jobs hypothesis we came up with – which is, that getting nice things makes people happy – we quickly realize that “niceness” is a problem of its own. A donkey considers hay as nice and would keep following you if you keep supplying hay, but humans can easily get bored of getting one thing. Hence, to humans, the niceness of a thing is – to a large extent – tied to its novelty.

This adds another variable to the equation. It adds the need for newness.

Building on the hypothesis with this new understanding, we can now say that **happiness is what happens when we get better things** – i.e. happiness is not really dependent on the “things”, but also on their novelty – their newness.

The above conclusion makes sense: Looking at Apple you can see that they are not only concerned with giving out “nice” things (unlike most companies which solely focus on providing “the best” of the “usual things”) but rather dream up “new” ideas and concepts – think about the face ID, the Finger Print, the Ear Pods, etc. For Apple, it is not always about having the highest RAM on your device, but having a new feature that makes your life a little bit better – something new, and nice to keep you happy.

This makes perfect sense when you observe our everyday life. A joke is funny when it is new. A movie is interesting when it just gets released. A stranger is drop-dead-gorgeous when they are still strangers – when we haven't gotten accustomed to them. Except in

extreme cases, it is hard to stay impressed and happy with old things – especially when new things become available – seducing you, and turning your heart away from what you already have.

But where does this lead? Where does the temptation of, and lust for some other new thing lead us? I'll tell you. It leads to unhappiness.

Happiness Has A Negative Twin – [What Is Unhappiness?]

Unhappiness is simply dissatisfaction with one's state of existence. It is what forces a person to start looking for new “things” in the first place. Without unhappiness, there would be no need to chase anything. Remember, the happy sheep do not run off – they flock around the good old shepherd that has always met their needs.

But humans are perpetually chasing. We need to get new things to be happy; we have no shepherd either – we have no choice. It is because of (and through) unhappiness that we seek and get what we need, and that makes us happy. So, in a weird way, unhappiness causes us to be happy – as it drives us towards happiness.

Think about it; you are full (i.e. happy) until you start feeling hungry. You must have heard of the word hangry, you must have also heard the phrase, “a hungry man is an angry man”. And what happens after the hungry man eats? He becomes a happy man – but soon he gets hungry again, and the cycle continues – happiness and unhappiness intertwine – like the Yin and Yang of the Chinese.

Happiness Is Complicated – [Can You Be Happy Every Day?]

You could have food, but lack clothing and be unhappy about that. You could have food, and clothing and be unhappy because you lack shelter. You could also have food, clothing, and shelter, yet be unhappy that you don't have a mate. And, you could have a mate, food, shelter, and clothing, and then be unhappy if you don't have a sense of purpose (or meaning in life). And all these would have their distinct cycles of happiness and unhappiness – all bothering (or even tormenting) you to different degrees.

But to make matters worse, it is incredibly hard to have all we want (or not to need any of these things) at any single point in time – especially the things which are not even tangible in the first place.

It is hard not to ever get hungry, or lonely. There must be times when your body exhausts the food you have in your belly. There must be times when your mate is not close by. It is these moments that contribute to little (and sometimes enormous) bouts of unhappiness. And these moments are all scattered throughout your daily life – at different points in..., this is not to consider the occasional bad days.

This means, that **a typical day is filled with both happiness and unhappiness**; there is no way around this.

Looking critically, you would realize that, in a strange way, we are always happy until we realize that we are unhappy, yet we do not notice much. On the flipside, we are always unhappy until we are happy. Our unhappiness drives us to happiness, and that happiness fades into unhappiness. It is a sort of paradox. It is sort of backward.

This tug of war – this yin and yang – this front and back – this peace and conflict – this endless cycles – serves one purpose: to indicate our current state – is it pleasant, unpleasant, or can things be better?

Why We Feel Happy, or Unhappy

Happiness, or lack thereof, from the explanation above, is only an indicator of transient states of being. The feelings are as unstable as a detached leaf in the wind. And a life that is filled with unhappiness may just equally be filled with happiness – because they require both to exist – yet the observer (the individual with the life experiences) may only be paying attention to the unhappiness – because humans have a tendency to focus on the negative. It is the reason we would ponder on a negative comment for hours or days, despite receiving hundreds of positive feedback – we are wired to pay attention to unhappiness.

But, even if we assume that it is possible to tilt the tides so that one state becomes dominant; then, we are also to consider the fact that the forces that shift the tides are more important than the tides themselves. That is to say, the things that matter are the things that instigate the feelings rather than the feelings themselves.

Remember, **the reason we feel happy and unhappy is only to help us navigate life** – to move towards the things that are nice or good for us, and away from the things that are not nice or bad for us.

In our analysis so far, we have concluded that getting new nice things is what changes the emotional state of humans. If we combine this with the argument above, we arrive at the conclusion that **it is possible to synthesize and control both our happiness and unhappiness – purely based on how we approach getting or casting away, our needs.**

Synthesizing Happiness – [How Does Happiness Affect Our Life?]

Happiness is easy – just chase something new and nice. If you want to be happy, eat ice cream. But, controlling the quality of your life is another story. A lot of ice cream, though a good strategy for becoming instantly happy, can lead to a terrible life – I’m talking about diabetes and obesity.

Nevertheless, most people are not that aware – they cannot see that far into the future. What this does is place power in the hands of the few who are aware – i.e. those who realize that little things add up – one plate of ice cream daily can make all the difference.

Like Steve Jobs exemplified, you can pretty much shape reality by shaping what makes people happy. Why? Because people gravitate toward happiness. By holding sway to their happiness, you hold sway to their money, beliefs, and even life.

The pursuit of happiness drives people to buy things (like food, or cars), believe things (like religion or ideology), and do things (like swimming or getting married). More correctly, it drives them to buy expensive things, believes in fascinating ideas, and do daring things. The more it is new –or, at least, not old – the more it is different from the ordinary – the better.

This is why people who want to be happy sometimes go on shopping sprees – it is the fastest way to get new nice things; even if you are not going to use any of those new nice things.

Happiness is a reward for chasing and getting something. It is not on its own something that exists in you, or outside of you so to speak. It is the reason soldiers would be happy to die for honor, and teenage girls would be happy they got likes on TikTok. Both honor and likes are abstract concepts – but we are humans with strange needs – so we chase them, get them, and are happy, at least for the moment.

Needless to say, not being able to get what you need, would lead to unhappiness – even if that thing is food, sex, applause, likes, or some other trivial nonsense.

Bosses go batty when you don't make an extra dollar for the multibillion-dollar company, whilst the kid would throw tantrums because they didn't get the right shade of the yellow yoyo they asked for.

Stay Zen – [How Do You Find Happiness Within Yourself?]

One thing can be gleaned from all these: **humans have the ability to choose their needs, and that is enough to make them happy. And if done correctly, they can genuinely improve the quality of their lives, happily.** At least, besides the fundamentals, such as food, shelter, and clothing, we pretty much manufacture our needs – and this is perhaps, why different things make different people happy in different ways, and to different extents.

To control the quality of your life, you must control the quality of your happiness. And to do that, you must control the quality of the things you pick to chase, and how you chase them.

When take your time to consider the nature of happiness, you would realize that, sometimes, **deciding that something is not worth chasing is all it takes to make yourself happy with your current state – it is all it takes to ward off unhappiness** (because unhappiness comes from failing to get something you want.)

“Craving and desire are the cause of all unhappiness. Everything sooner or later must change, so do not become attached to anything. Instead, devote” .

– The Buddha

The Buddha is telling us to not just desist from chasing “things”, but to also detach from the “things” that we already have – to remind ourselves that everything is transient...and if there is something we must do, it is to care for those things that are with us - constantly reminding ourselves that they are important, enough, and deserve love.

Unless you are starving, naked, homeless, dying, or suffering some intolerable pain, your life is exactly what someone is praying for. Whenever you feel your heart growing bitter because you don't have the latest products of Apple, realize that Apple (although their products are useful) wants people to keep chasing those new-nice products with money (no matter how ridiculous), because money is good for business.

And so, Apple keeps bringing new Apple products, and that is how you go from The iPhone, iPhone 3G, iPhone 4, to iPhone 13 and counting – and since there is no end to numbers, happiness would never reach its limits (sadly, so too would unhappiness – its negative twin).

“He is richest who is content with the least, for content is the wealth of nature”

– Socrates

The point? Chasing happiness without deciding on what is worth that chase, makes you vulnerable to the manipulation of other people, organizations, or governments. It can become costly and dangerous. What is expedient is to first set your aim on a worthwhile and meaningful course.

You don't have to tie your happiness to things you can't control, or goals that are too broad, and difficult to attain. If you have the desire to live a happy, and meaningful life, then you should set your aim on accomplishing simple, mundane, and sometimes boring things, that are meaningful, just like the ants. It may be going out to get your daily bread – which could entail working for someone or yourself. It may be raising a child - by helping them to walk, talk, or read. It may even be reading a book in order to learn new and nice things every day.

Carrying out meaningful activities – like working, raising kids, or reading – may not provide as much thrill (in the short run) as playing video games, drinking, or eating, but they do more than compensate in the long run. In fact, in the long run, most of the activities that

provide short-term gratifications usually reveal themselves to be meaningless (at best), or harmful (at worse).

So far, we've examined how happiness works, and why we need to be cautious about it. But, there is still a lot to be said about the nature of the things that make us happy, and how we can be better at picking or rejecting them as the case may be.

Part 2: The Happiness Survey – What Triggers or Influences Happiness?

A skeptic, or someone who is particularly drawn to their pleasures, may disregard all these as a nice play of words. Maybe I've read too many books and YouTube videos. Maybe all these are far from the truth, right?

Well...to know for sure, (like all scientific thinkers) I made a hypothesis, and then tested it.

I hypothesized that humans have three primary categories of needs:

The 3 Things That Make You Happy – [What Is The Secret To True or Real Happiness?]

Video Recommendation [Don't chase happiness. Become antifragile | Tal Ben-Shahar](#)

When I pondered on the question of what truly makes people happy, I realized that all of the things I could think of could fall well within three categories:

- **Money**
- **Sex, and**
- **God**

I hypothesized that they were all that humans have been condemned to pursue – pretty much how sheep and cattle are condemned to (literally) “chase” green pastures all through their lives – that they were the secret to eternal happiness.

According to my hypothesis:

- Money encompasses all assets a person can possess. This includes food, houses, cars, knowledge, connections, and so on.
- Sex referred to all forms of human interactions, ranging from friendship, and family, down to coitus. It was about emotional connection.
- God referred to a sense of purpose and meaning. It could be doing the things you love (not necessarily money-generating activities – think skydiving, or painting), leaving a legacy (like building a company), raising protégées, getting to know your place in the universe, or quite literally getting to know the Being that has made you be – i.e. getting to know the big capital “G” God. It is about doing things that are beyond you, or make you feel like your life has a purpose and meaning. You can consider it spiritual in a sense

What 1,780 People Think About Happiness [What Is Happiness based on?]

Warning: *This survey was not carried out with the intention of finding out any new category of what makes people happy, but to check if the happiness of people cut across the aforementioned three categories. Needless to say, there would be outliers (as in the case with Bell curve distributions – where minorities are oftentimes overlooked) and the possibility of a huge category being missed (due to added dimensions). But, for the sake of this survey, if a sufficient number of people falls within the three categories, then we would consider the hypothesis valid (to a reasonable extent). That said, this survey does not in any way, claim that human happiness is limited or confined to the three categories – Money, Sex, and God – even if the writer may appear to sound resolved on the matter. As much as this would make some readers uncomfortable, it is important to note that this conclusion was needed in creating structure and avoiding ambiguity.*

...anyways, I wasn't sure of my hypothesis, so I decided to carry out a survey.

I didn't do anything fancy either; I just sent out a broadcast message to 1,780 people on my contact list, asking them to tell me what they think would make them happy now and forever, every day.

The result was ridiculously similar to what I envisioned.

Money topped the chart. Then there was God. Followed by Sex. The rest were people who had super-specific needs as of the moment – such as gaining admission into a College, fixing their Facebook Ads account, getting their businesses up and running, and stuffs like that – failing to be valid answers to a lifelong source of happiness (as they were only transient) they were not classified.

Though, the uncategorized responses also served to affirm that happiness is born from chasing things (or you can say, achieving goals) – I'm sure getting the Facebook Ads to account fixed, or getting admission into a College would make them temporarily as gleeful as [SpongeBob](#). But then it stops – because you can't be fixing Facebook ads account or gaining admissions daily. I know this because even *SpongeBob* has to go to the [Krusty Krabs](#) daily in order to maintain that happiness – without the *Krusty Krabs*, there is no happy *SpongeBob*. Period.

When I reconsidered the uncategorized responses, I also realized that that was, in fact, a smokescreen. My deduction was that those who sort to gain admissions were actually striving for a sense of meaning (i.e. God), or were trying to ultimately get a certificate that would enable them to get “Money” in the future. Needless to say, it is possible to be in two categories – seeking multiple new nice things – at once (we've talked about this before).

Interestingly no one made mention of **Health**

How can people forget health

Maybe because it is like oxygen. You only know its value when it is scarce or no more.

It All Lined Up – [What Is The Secret To Happiness?]

As I went through the responses, I realized that people were chasing those three basic things; and it was conversely determining their happiness or unhappiness depending on the result of the chase so far.

But then again, the Survey revealed something more interesting to me. It showed that though many of these people had “common” goals, the means to attain them were drastically different.

For example, The Christians told me they wanted to know [Jesus](#) more (to even see Him face to face, or at least, get into Heaven). While the Muslims told me they loved being Muslims (that Jannah – Paradise or Garden – was a nice place they would love to get into someday).

Other people who struggled with accommodation, feeding, or other health challenges, all said they needed money because money could help them achieve these diverse objectives. Yet, in actuality, getting them food, accommodation, or health care would have made them happy, and not money in itself. This is why Money is more or less an umbrella name for the endless material things we pursue.

Some also said things along the lines of having a peaceful home, a life partner, and other sappy-sounding things that might make a Granny teary eye if they read it all. I read it all. And it made sense. We all need that. We all have these emotional needs. And I think it rightfully deserved its own category – Sex. Though I’m beginning to think “Love” would have been a better choice of label. But all the same, you get the idea. So, let’s proceed.

One more thing. The one seemingly unclear response I got was those of people seeking “Peace of Mind”. Now, it’s very vague what that means. This is because, for a murderer, it could be having their conscience or nightmares entirely taken away. For a fugitive, it might be clearing their criminal records. For someone who has done some stupid or horrible thing – like impregnating a girl, they do not want to marry or piss off a Mafia family – having all that go away might just

be it. So, I can't tell. But, I'm pretty sure that Peace of Mind overlaps with Money, God, and Sex in some peculiar way.

Or maybe it belongs to the category no one mentioned, earlier Health

Maybe [mental health](#) was what they really meant by "Peace of Mind"

As a matter of fact, I think without a good measure of health happiness simply can't exist

Health is not a category on my list it is in fact the foundation, it must be in place before any other thing

"Without health there is no happiness. An attention to health, then, should take the place of every other object."

— Thomas Jefferson

Hence secret to being happy is having our emotional intellectual spiritual and social needs met to a reasonable extent whilst being healthy

How To Set Up A Happy Life – [How Do You Find What Makes You Happy In Life?]

Indeed, happiness is dependent on more than one of these broad categories. It might even only exist by the combination of these categories.

For instance, you could only feel happy when you earn money in a way that is in alignment with your God – to you, money is important but would bring you happiness if and only if it was gotten in a way that solves the problem of [plastic pollution](#) in the world's oceans.

Hence, you would be happy every day you find yourself in the recycling company working and making money. That is to say, if you make a million today, it would mean you've cleared a million dozen of plastic wastes, and that gives you both financial freedom and a sense

of meaning and fulfillment in life. That is God and Money beautifully married together in your happy life.

When you understand this, you would also realize that no person's definition of happiness (or [success](#)) is particularly right for you. This is because there are innumerable things that fall within each of the three basic categories, and the combination of these innumerable variables leads to infinite ways to be happy.

Your happiness is your happiness – no one should determine it, and neither is it necessary for anyone to understand it, save you. This holds true as long as it is enjoyed within your bonds – as long as it doesn't cross the lines. We would talk more about these bounds/lines in the next part.

Cups Of Happiness – [How Can I get Daily Happiness?]

Sometimes your happiness may not be linked, but rather distributed across those categories, so that the more categories you have ticked, the happier you would be. At least, if you can remind yourself that those essentials are enough – so you don't fall into the trap of seeking more, and more, and more, ad infinitum.

I, for example, would be happier if I get to know the Maker of the Universe like I know my parents, or maybe better. I would be happier if I were totally free from the shackles of money. I would also be happier if I had a lover right now caressing my chest and kissing my lips as I write these. The constant awareness and reassurance that my life is not some cosmic accident (i.e. a sense of Coherence), that I don't need to worry about material things like food, clothing, gadgets, vehicles, etc, and can now focus on the more meaningful endeavor (i.e. having the freedom to pursue purpose in my life, rather than going in circles chasing money), and that someone deeply loves and cares for me – particularly in a romantic way (i.e. a sense of Mattering) - would pretty much keep me happy every waking moment of my life. As you can see, it encompasses the three main

categories in my hypothesis, yet they are not necessarily linked. In fact, I could have one and lack the other. I might even gain one and lose the other. In some extreme cases, I may not be able to have both at once.

Quick Side Note: Coherence, Purpose, and Mattering have been argued to be the three facets that comprise a [meaningful life](#). So, if you're feeling lost, you are most likely lacking one of those.

To better understand, imagine each category to be a cup. You could have content in different cups, and in different quantities. I (again), for example, have some "God", or a sense of Coherence (this is because I, by logic and faith, believe the universe was made by someone or something – I love referring to as "The Maker" – who has thought it necessary to make me a Homo Sapiens and not a piece of rock. Hence, the world makes sense to me in that regard). I have enough "Money" to keep food on my table, clothes on my body, and a roof over my head so that I can sit down and write a book like this that I believe would serve some Purpose. And (this would sound weird) I have enough "Sex" because I have people I care about deeply (even though I don't show it enough) and who care about me deeply (even though I may not fully realize the extent), which makes me feel like I Matter in this world – that people think I am important to them in some way.

If you're reading this – if you have the privilege of owning a Smartphone, or even being able to read these scribbles called alphabets, chances are that you are blessed as much as I am (if not more)

You probably have some Money in your life, no matter how little – I know because you're reading this. You probably have some measure of God in your life, giving you a sense of meaning and purpose (or else you would have been contemplating suicide rather than reading this). And you also have some sort of Sex going on (family, friends, or even a literal sex partner...you know).

And it is a good thing. Life is more than good if there is a luxury of having things like "peace of mind"...and we do have these nice things

here and there, and to different degrees, every once in a while, or at most times (depending on where you are in life right now)...no one has it all though. No life is perfect. And that too is fair enough.

But I won't judge you if you don't practice what the Buddha teaches because even I (every once in a while) ignore everything (good in my life) and fixate on the things I do not have – like, not being able to date Kylie Jenner, or owning Half of Telsa's stock.

Don't be like me, **be like Buddha.**

We've come a long way with this topic...But how does all this information help you live a happy, good and meaningful life?

Well, I'm glad you asked

How To Be Exceedingly, Enormously, Ever So Happy – [How To Find Happiness In Everyday Life?]

Abraham Lincoln once said, "Most folks are as happy as they make up their mind to be."

Just to help refresh your mind (about all we've said about happiness), and to also inform you that the whole Steve Jobs and Apple thing wasn't some misguided conclusions that we landed on, I'll like to point to the work of someone who I respect – who is famous – and who arrive at the same conclusion:

In his bestseller, [*The Subtle Art Of Not Giving A Fuck*](#), Mark Manson wrote, "Happiness is a constant work-in-progress...The solutions to today's problems will lay the foundation for tomorrow's problems". He further wrote, "Happiness comes from solving problems. To be happy we need something to solve."

In essence, not only does NOT having all your needs met create space for you to achieve more happiness (by now solving/chasing them),

your happiness is strongly tied to your current level of unhappiness. So much so that without being unhappy, you cannot be happy. And as soon as you become happy, you forget – you cease to think about just how happy you are and start thinking about something else that you feel would make you happier (thereby making yourself effectively unhappy with your formally happy state) – and that depletes (or more correctly, cancels out) your happiness.

On top of it all, the unhappy position you are in life right now is the position someone is wishing to attain in order to be happy. Whilst the position you think would make you happy is the position someone else is in and is unhappy. Hope you still remember that icky paradox we flirted with in the beginning...

Your happiness is, therefore, equivalent to someone else's unhappiness. And your unhappiness is equal to someone else's happiness.

This is the reason the Buddha discouraged chasing new nice things, but to consider the old things as nice enough to be new in our hearts – to devote to those things. It is the reason we are encouraged to practice gratitude.

If you want to be exceedingly, enormously, ever so happy, then **you must practice gratitude for all you already have**. The deeper your gratitude, the richer, and fuller your happiness.

If you've ever wondered how kids living in impoverished, and war-torn nations manage to still smile, play, and live (sometimes long and fulfilling lives), while many people living in developed countries become irritable and dissatisfied with life (because of the flimsiest of things), now you know.

Be grateful for everything. Genuinely find a reason to be grateful. It is an effective antidote to setbacks, loss, and despair. This doesn't mean you shouldn't do anything to remedy a bad situation. But consider that it is a whole lot better than complaining or worrying. It helps you approach life with optimism and faith. You should also be grateful bad things happened sooner rather than later – now it is in the past.

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Now that you are up to speed again, let's proceed to the treadmill.

The Hedonic Treadmill – The Circle Of Disappointment and Happiness

Counting your blessings is not a delusional practice preached by fools, and believed by gullible people. Gratitude is actually a (if not “the”) key to happiness.

The Human mind is designed super efficiently, not always “accurate”, nor intended to make you happy. It is designed to keep you alive. It is designed to keep you chasing – Money, Sex, and God. It is designed to keep you getting more and more. Because getting things means you have a better chance of being alive – and to the brain, being alive is all that matters.

So that, even if you made a million today, you might not feel so much different from when you made your first 10k – they both have the potential of keeping you alive.

I once had a weird experience with Money that I want to share with you.

The thing is, I realized that after I made my first hundred thousand Naira, I didn't feel much happier than when I made my first ten thousand Naira. In fact, the second time I got my huge paycheck, I was actually a bit sad because I had just discovered that the girl I was beginning to really pick interest in was already in love with someone else. Ouch! – talk about having different cups filled (or in this case, emptied) to different degrees...

In all, a hundred thousand Naira didn't make me moonwalk, or scream for joy – it was rather a bit disappointing.

This (feeling of disappointment) was also the same feeling I got when I had my first Sex. When you are a virgin, you put a lot of pressure,

attachment, sacredness, and expectations into sex, only to hump for a while and realize this is just flesh rubbing flesh.

Don't get me wrong. Good sex is delightful. So also, is making money. But in the end, it is just flesh rubbing flesh. It is just more bills. It is just more of the same damn thing.

It's like a guinea pig on a treadmill chasing a treat. It may think, and does think that running faster would get it closer – but it doesn't. This is because the treat is usually positioned in such a way that it can only be nibbled (a bit)... no matter how fast the guinea pig runs, it can only nibble, and that's that.

We are the guinea pig. The treat is the happiness we pursue. And the treadmill is all that we do to get closer to happiness. But it's all an illusion – a mirage. In fact, there is a word for it in psychology: The Hedonic treadmill.

It is hopeless to think you would ever get the treat and keep it without ever running to nibble another tiny bit, every darn time, ever again.

Happiness is like your favorite cake. You crave it so much until you have eaten enough of it. After which you don't think much about it until the craving starts again.

It is not that Money, Sex, and God are not worth chasing, but that you should always remain self-aware. Knowing that this chase – the process of gravitating towards that thing – is what is important and not the treat.

You cannot dwell on your Money, Sex, or God. But you must learn to be in constant contact with them. You must create a healthy relationship with them. You must learn to run.

- For Money: You may never become a billionaire (as the odds are truly against you – with only 2,043 billionaires amongst 7.4 billion humans, there are literally more chances of being struck by lightning than becoming a billionaire – in dollars), but you should always keep the money coming nonetheless. Having a (preferably multiple) steady source of income is a healthy relationship with money. Pegging your happiness on becoming

a Billionaire is unhealthy (that dream is the treat you may never get). Understand that the happiness it brings is only a mirage. You shouldn't be upset you aren't a millionaire by 24; you should be rather grateful you were able to consistently generate a hundred thousand Naira monthly to foot all your bills. In the long run, a hundred thousand monthly would make you happier than one billionaire Naira at once. Now, I don't know which is better, financially speaking, but as long as happiness is concerned, you have to keep that guinea pig running.

- For Sex: You shouldn't be upset you aren't dating [Kylie Jenner](#), but rather happy you have a lovely family, friends, or maybe even a lover that cares deeply about you. You should be content that you even have a neighbor. You should be glad that you are not the only one on earth. I'm not saying dating Kylie is not cool, I'm just saying getting stuck on an empty planet with Kylie would suck.
- For God: You should be content that what you do helps someone in a way – that your work is meaningful, even if it is being a housewife and raising well-cultured and astute children. You should be happy that you are alive (even frenzied that life exists in the first place). In fact, when you look at the odds of life existing in the universe or on the planet, combine that with the odds of being born, and further combine that with the odds of being in this (relatively) advantageous position you are in life right now, or the odds of not even being dead already, you would realize that simply being alive and savoring this waking-life experience is more than enough “God” in your life. It is more than enough reason to be happy (all pain and suffering considered).

All these realizations – i.e. the process of counting your blessings – is gratitude, and that is what would keep you happy forever. But it is hard to keep your eyes on the things you have – it is hard not to chase.

Happiness is the mirage that keeps you chasing. Remember that Happiness is transient – it is not the destination – just like a mirage. It changes its position. It cannot be touched.

Understand that happiness and unhappiness are indicators that help us navigate towards a better life. Happiness drives us towards a better state, whilst unhappiness drives us away from an unpleasant state. Both come with originally good intentions. Both make us miserable, but only if we allow them to.

If you've ever thought that you are making yourself miserable now in order to be happy in the future, you seriously need to snap out of it now.

There is a difference between sacrificing, enduring pain, and being unhappy. Someone can be in pain and be happy about it – ask any athlete.

If you are going to live a life that may be demanding now, at least let it be something that you are passionate about – [something you love doing](#) or feel a strong sense of satisfaction and meaning doing. That even is a source of happiness – it is a way you reach out to your God.

The question isn't if happiness is good or bad. It is not even if they are worth sacrificing or not. The situation (i.e. life) is beyond all those. The point is, set your aim towards something meaningful – something worthwhile and good – then make that (yes, you can choose) something to be happy about – make that the thing you chase.

Jim Cary says it best, he says “I think everyone should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of so they can see that it's not the answer”.

Maybe you dream of being happy someday. Well. That is misguided. You need to be happy to achieve any meaningful goal in the first place – happiness needs to line the way to your success. You should be able to do it whether there are fans or not, whether there are failures or not, and whether other people see it as important or not.

If you want to stay happy, stop pegging your happiness on big dreams – stop trying to get to the treat. Stop.

Learn from Steve Jobs, Apple, and 1,780 people that it is about defining your own happiness, coming up with your own worthy new nice things, and accepting that not all the cups of your happiness will be full at all times, nor at once. It is for you to realize that it is not

about the big win, but the small consistent wins. That it is not about getting more, but being more grateful.

Count your blessings and name them one by one, and you would be surprised just how much happiness you will find every day.

Part 3: A Good Life – What is the purpose of life if not happiness?

Living on earth is tedious for every living thing. Being a naked primate with no tangible physical arsenal or defense mechanism makes it tougher. But what is most frustrating about living is that there never seems to be a break, from the drama. Seriously, there are no breaks – no end to troubles and worries.

It is so hectic, that so many people begin to flirt with suicide, whilst some others decide that human existence must be a mistake, and then decide to go genocidal. Almost no one is particularly thrilled to be a vulnerable animal that would die, decay, and be forgotten one day. Even being happy is a miracle – a miracle that happens every day nonetheless.

This is because as humans, we would not simply bend to fate – we would not just roam naked and aimlessly like all other beasts – we would build a world of our own (free from most, if not all, of the hostility of nature) and dare to be happy on this hostile planet. We would chase happiness. And we have been...we have been chasing happiness for ages now, and show no signs of stopping.

Nevertheless, the depressing reality is that the mindless pursuit of happiness has also caused serious problems – sometimes worse than the ones we try to escape.

As a species, our general pursuit of happiness has led to things such as global warming (due to excessive emission of CO₂ gas), nuclear fallouts (thanks to nuclear warheads), and biological hazards (wrought by biological weapons), just to mention a few; all of which has the capacity to wipe out our entire species, along with a host other species (if not all others) on the planet.

On an individual level, it is the pursuit of happiness that drives people to abuse substances, get into toxic relationships, get into crappy jobs, kill someone who wronged them (or who they are jealous of), rape (vulnerable people), and relishes in joyriding – thrilled by the danger –

stepping on the pedal till the car flips over killing everyone, etcetera, etcetera...

Everyone has different things that make them happy in different ways

to different extents, but then there needs to be morality to it – there must be lines that must not be crossed

It is not wise, safe, nor sufficient to chase happiness alone – for the sole purpose of being happy. Why? It is because happiness is insufficient...happiness can oftentimes become a nuisance. Happiness should be watched closely

The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

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Tricking Happiness: Is there a shortcut to stay happy?

There is something to be said about those who use drugs to trick their minds into thinking it's happy. These are the people who rather than allow the brain's craving for happiness and avoidance of unhappiness to both direct and facilitate their lives, delude it by playing with its biochemistry.

They tell their brains that it has gotten a reward – i.e. that it has gained something (i.e. God, Money, or Sex), and is now happy – even though they clearly haven't gained anything.

And, the brain being what it is, always loves to run towards happiness (by assuming the current state, which was once considered happy, is no longer sufficient) and pushes them to do more of what brought them that happiness. This creates a self-perpetuating feedback loop. And the result? [Addictions](#).

People get addicted when they fool around with their brain's reward systems. Experiences that were supposed to come after long periods of time, and with sufficient suffering, now take the click of a button or the popping of a pill. It is essentially happiness in the click of a mouse, or in a bottle.

Porn, drugs, alcohol, masturbation, sugar, and so on, are all concentrated rewards that usually don't occur that way naturally.

You get enamored with erotic flashes of people mating. You get intoxicated with hallucinogens that were extracted in the lab. You get dopamine hits when you drink sizzling soda with absurd amounts of sugar and sweeteners. You delude the mind. You trick happiness.

And while I may not be able to argue the goodness, or badness of these habits – nor insist that one should not indulge them – one thing is certain: They are not helpful.

Yes, that struggle of defining what would make you happy, and time taken to pick and follow a path to that happiness (or escape from unhappiness) is a very useful struggle.

It is what has inspired the creation of all the fascinating things we enjoy today in the world – including sticky notes (as trivial as they seem).

In case you don't know, it was Arthur Fry's unhappiness with bookmarks falling off his hymn books that inspired the adoption of a very weak glue in making sticky notes. It was the unhappiness of Satoshi with the way banking was carried out that led to the invention of [Blockchain](#). It was the unhappiness of the [Enlightenment Kids](#) that led to the creation of Democracy.

By resolving their unhappiness through struggle, they made an impact. And because their happiness was hard-earned, something tangible came off it. It also meant that their happiness got renewed every time they looked back at their inventions or achievements.

But what does an addict look back to when their happiness depletes? Is it the debt they've racked up? The time they've wasted? Or the disappointment stamped on the faces of their loved ones?

Perhaps it is not a good idea to trick happiness. Perhaps it is not a good idea to try to find shortcuts out of unhappiness.

The Role Of Happiness And Unhappiness In A Hostile World

There is a reason the human mind is perpetually dissatisfied. As unpleasant as it feels, unhappiness is what has made life as pleasant as we have it today.

A lot of people have this romanticized perception of Nature (I do not call it “understanding of nature”, because it is not; it is rather distorted and naive). This is because they do not really appreciate the depths humanity is coming from.

Nature is not biased. But it is not necessarily loving either – but rather indifferent. Yes, Earth supports life, but it is not only human life it supports. It supports the lions, snakes, mosquitoes, fungi, bacteria, viruses, and all other nasty living things out there wanting to feast on us. In summary, nature doesn’t give a damn. It is rather hostile, and only the fittest make it out alive – only the fittest enjoy its support of life to any reasonable extent. Humans were “fit” (which means we could survive), but we were also barely enduring life (which means we lived in peril to a great extent).

We were naked creatures with soft bodies. A spider could kill us. A mosquito could kiss us. Even a tapeworm could kill us. We, on the other hand, weren’t very good at killing either. We had no venoms, claws, fangs, or anything really. We were sitting ducks – except that ducks, at least, have feathers that insulate them from the cold.

But we refused to die. We had to do something. The task was monstrous. How does an animal of no significance bring the forces of nature under subjection? It becomes unhappy suffering.

The result? We picked up stones, sticks, and fire. We studied the behavior of nature (the elements) and all its monsters (i.e. viruses, bacteria, lions, etc.). We combined and tested different materials and

substances till we succeeded in solving different problems (most times by accident). Then we documented the success as knowledge and experience and transferred them to generations to come. And with each success relieving our suffering, our brains doubled down on the power of unhappiness, so much so that we can now complain about the Pizza arriving 2 minutes late. But it is not yet enough – unhappiness still has a huge role to keep playing.

In fact, the human brain has developed to the point that not having challenges to fuel that feeling of dissatisfaction or unhappiness, fuels it further to seek out challenges to solve. When you think deeply about it, you would find that we are one big problem-solving machine.

Don't you hate when there are no challenges? Think about it. You have an affection for challenges in some way..only, you just don't just realize it, yet. It is the reason you and I don't like playing games that are too easy or lack appreciation for things that didn't cost us much. It is the reason we go after the hottest, tallest, smartest girl or guy. It is the reason we want to be rich – we want it because it is challenging.

We want rare things. We want problems to solve - goals to achieve, milestones to smash. It is ingrained into our psyche. It is what keeps us going.

To some, it is about Money. To others, it is about Sex. Whilst to some others it is about God. We all want what is difficult. What is extra? We want to go through the limits. we want it badly. We want to come out on top. It is what drives us...it is what kills us.

Sometimes we are intimidated. We get tired. We shy away. We run away from the problem...and it eats us...it kills us...it makes us unhappy... it is unhappiness breeding unhappiness without an outlet. This is not good. It can lead to depression if it continues. It can lead to dark places. It can lead to death.

We know we want what is on the other side, but it seems too far off. So, we compromise or surrender to something or someone that promises an easy way out (a way to short circuit the perilous feedback loop). This (most times) comes with consequences – it

places a cap on our happiness too – it is both limiting and restricting, as it makes us dependent.

For full happiness to be reached, we need to overcome it by ourselves. You want to cheer the kid on the pitch, not win the game for him. It is better to lose than to have the victory taken away from you. But we compromise every day nonetheless. This could be giving up on pursuing our dreams to get a job we don't really like. It might be getting married out of desperation. It might be anything – as long as it does not excite us – as long as it is not what we had set out to achieve at first...

It is the reason a lot of people find themselves in places where they are constantly in need of reassurance, motivation, or encouragement. They are struggling to live. They are not happy. They are caged. And they sometimes break down – explode by attacking the world, or implode by attacking themselves... it is either suicide or murder. Would you let yourself fall into this double bind?

Don't trick happiness. Don't short-circuit unhappiness.

Religions, Philosophy, And Happiness

In a rudely indifferent universe, it is hard to think of anything worthwhile. What should I do with my life? How can I enjoy my life? How can I be happy without ruining everything? How should I live? These questions swirl in our heads, float up into the clouds above us when we are distracted by life's trivialities, only to rain back down at us when we are sober, alone...thinking.

A lot of religions have come up with explanations. Some claim that the Maker of the universe has communicated to them the purpose of life, and what we must do – that this is what would fill us with joy unimaginable, mostly after we die. But you and I know that most of those claims are riddled with inconsistencies and issues – and are easily corrupted by the whims of imperfect humans if it wasn't all an intentional (corrupt) lie all along.

Philosophers have battled for years and have no good news for us either. In fact, one famous philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer, wrote, "Human life must be some kind of mistake. The truth of this will be sufficiently obvious if we only remember that man is a compound of needs and necessities hard to satisfy; and that even when they are satisfied, all he obtains is a state of painlessness, where nothing remains to him but abandonment to boredom."

To better illustrate the condition of humans, an American novelist, Kurt Vonnegut, made an allegory of two yeast cells that were eating sugar and discussing the possible purposes of their lives. But all the while not knowing that it was all about producing Champagne (for humans) as they suffocated on their excrements and died (yeast farts are essentially what you see as bubbles in champagne, just as humans eat the byproduct of bees – honey).

So also we do not know what our purpose is; and just like the yeast cells, we may never be able to know for the simple reason that it might just be beyond our understanding. Though a lot of religious people would argue vehemently against this conclusion.

Even if we try to ride along the train of thought that a Maker is truly in charge; it is still ridiculous to claim that this or that is the will of that Maker. A lot of them (religious people) would agree that God works in mysterious ways. Also remember, it is no use explaining to a chicken that all the care and attention you give to it is so you can kill it for Thanksgiving. There is no possible way for it to grasp that concept – chickens don't care about days of the week, not to speak of festivals or Thanksgiving.

Smart people like Albert Einstein also made such observations that the human mind cannot comprehend the concept of God. Even if a God (who we can assume is rearing us, but hopefully not with the intention of eating us, like we do poultry and livestock) tries to communicate our purpose to us, we may not be able to grasp it – just as it is futile to communicate with a hen. This may also explain why so many religions have so many interpretations of the will of that Maker. With that, I remove this discourse from the table of religion.

So, where does that leave us? In a cold universe where our happiness can be hazardous (at worse), or just paddles and indicators that guide us (at best)? And that has no intrinsic “meaning” of its own (in reality)?

Maybe so...but there is more

Emergence And Happiness

“Happiness is not useful (to an individual) unless it benefits the [emergence](#).”

The statement (above) is so simple and bold that it sounds ludicrous. But when you think about it deeply, you’d find that anything short of this would lead to misery – in some sense.

A good life should align individual happiness with the betterment and progress of the human species.

Why?

We are an emergent species: We are wired to cooperate like the ants, though at a much more sophisticated level. Our individual actions produce the net action of our families, societies, and the human entire human race (something that is simply described as Emergence), and the actions of that Emergence affect every individual. There is no running away from this. It is what we are – we are all tiny bits of a larger body – the Emergence – our [societies](#), nations, continents, and the world at large.

It is by solving little problems that we solve the big problems. It is by creating small problems that we create big problems – neglecting a problem is also as detrimental as creating one.

Humans run into a problem when they try to seek happiness at the expense of others. And the reason is not even far-fetched – you do not even need the finger of a God to recompense. The fact is that people reciprocate, copy, or at least learn. Hence, if you harm, you would be harmed, avoided, or teach someone else to harm. If you

help, you would be assisted, loved, or at least teach another to do the same. Sometimes indirectly...most times directly.

It is no wonder, that one of the tenets of the sages through the ages right to this very moment has always been to “love others as much as you love yourself”. Christians can quickly understand this phrase from the Bible.

Well, I think a better statement of that fact should have been, “love your neighbors because you love yourself”.

I say this because of two reasons; the first is that humans are by nature, selfish. It is the core characteristic of living things to seek self-preservation – we talked about this earlier, and it has guided our discussion so far. Hence, when you tell them that the act of loving others is for their own good, they would most likely find the command more desirable to follow.

Secondly, it just makes sense. Loving others is good for you because humans are also by nature social creatures. This means, there is a very strong urge within every human to pay back – be it good or bad. If you give good to all your neighbors, wouldn't your life be much better?

God And Karma: Happiness At The Expense Of Others

When I first shared this idea of “shared happiness”, a lot of people rolled their eyes at the idea. They had a lot of reasons to. The fact is that there are a lot of very inconsiderate/bad/evil people who go on to sit on top of that Emergence. This includes Corrupt Politicians, Internet Fraudsters, and so much more. These people basically fund their luxurious lifestyles by intentionally hurting others badly. So, what can be said about that?

When you examine their lives, you find that they even send their kids to the best schools, live in peaceful neighborhoods, enjoy art and

music, etc. These people are clearly happy, and having a time of their lives, right?

So, how dare ancient books (like the Bible) tell us that those ways of living are wrong – whilst it clearly gives the individual the full gamut of happiness? Shouldn't we live as nature has made us – wild, and worshipers of the strong and fittest?

The problem comes from a misunderstanding of the Wisdom behind such words. It also stems from a misunderstanding of the human species.

If a single ant could build an ant hill, it would have been sensible for it to betray its ant brothers and sisters. But since it serves it well to cooperate with others, it lives by the dictates of the colony.

When you understand that humans aren't much different – when you realize that everything you do affects the entire race/species, which then affects you – you would quickly realize why such happiness is only short-lived. You would understand how a wealthy nation (like Nigeria) can be brought to its knees.

“...He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished; He will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon their children to the third and fourth generation”

– Numbers 14:18

When people cross the lines for the sake of immediate happiness (i.e. when they sin), it goes on to affect the future in a myriad of ways.

When people steal from the country's purse, they steal the infrastructures, jobs, employment, and happiness of all citizens. The result is that the country becomes less happy, less productive, and less developed. And guess who gets to live in that same country when their fathers (who originally robbed the country) are dead? The children and the children's children. They may decide to leave the country, but it would only mean that they have made themselves homeless, vagabonds and strangers in another land – with racism, and xenophobia, not lagging far – and for what? A fancy house?

(As an individual) When you lie to, steal from, rape or kill your fellow humans for some immediate happiness, your character is diminished, your neighbors suffer; distrust, bitterness, and anger ensues; and soon the community becomes unsafe, impoverished (since capital – both human and monetary – for meaningful work is destroyed/stolen), and darkness covers... these acts usually feels isolated until you realize that it takes several isolated cracks to bring down a building. If a man can lie in his home, his children would be lying to his face in no time – and it would be better than his so that he can't even detect, it till things start to go terribly wrong.

If you allow yourself to think beyond the lifetime of a single human, you can see that the punishment for the sins of our ancestors is already being visited upon us here in the country: We are banned from so many websites/platforms (payment gateways, dating sites, etc.), restricted from certain places, and lack basic infrastructures (roads, hospitals, electricity, etc.), violence/terrorism is on the rise, debt is climbing, and soon we may not even be able to pay off the interest on the debts we've piled. Soon, there would be no home for anyone – not even the rich. The wages of sin – death, and hell – are coming upon us (we, who are the children...).

Thankfully, there is a reversal. “Be sure of this: The wicked will not go unpunished, but those who are righteous will go free” (Proverbs 11:21), and again “let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” (Galatians 6:9). As before, you do not necessarily have to believe that Angels would come down from the skies with parcels of blessing with your name on them. Not necessarily. But, you have to understand that good also has its ripple effects throughout generations.

The good of one politician can create jobs for millions of youth. The good act of one youth can also inspire change and innovation.

You are not insignificant, and neither are your actions. You have the ability to tilt the course of history. Like [Gandhi](#) would say, “In a gentle way, you can shake the world”.

...

Perhaps the Monks and Prophets who kept adjuring people to be good to one another weren't crazy – maybe Karma or God really do come to recompense – and you do not want that reward to be punishment.

Perhaps I should also adjure you to take happiness for what it is, and relegate it to the backbench. Do what is important; do what is helpful; do what is meaningful. Do things that improve the lives of others, and yours. All the other good things you would find would fall into your lap if you could tie your happiness to doing that good to, and for others – they “would be added unto you”.

Money, assets, opportunities, and assistance would be gladly given to you because you have happily done something for someone else. In fact, this is the basis of all economic activities. It is the reason the cliché goes, “if you want to make money, find a problem and solve it”. If you scratch other people's itch, they would scratch yours too, most time in cash, other times in kind.

Love and attention would be poured out to you to the degree you pour out love and attention to others – be it family, friends, lovers, colleagues, or strangers.

Even animals and plants respond to this principle. If you water a plant and fertilize it today, it would be a source of food, shade, medicine, weapons, fuel, etc. when it is grown.

You reap what you sow (oftentimes by a thousand folds). Let your happiness be in planting good seeds – in doing good to others and the world – and your life would be blessed.

Do things that may be hard. Avoid the wrong and destructive things even if they promise a huge reward of happiness...because happiness is only a mirage...happiness is only a mechanism with which your mind steers you. Happiness should not be your compass. Goodness should be as it improves the Emergence – which you are a part of.

Don't allow yourself to be impulsive like little brats (always seeking their own). Rule over your urges, and desires. It is good to be happy, but you must control the “focus” and direction of that happiness by choosing the right mirage – the virtuous target to aim towards.

This is not about making your happiness second, but about readjusting it – making it about the Emergence – keeping it within the lines – attracting the blessing of Karma and God.

Injustice: Where Was God Or Karma?

There are countless instances where cruel, selfish, and wicked people have done hideous things and have gone unpunished; with their generations even enjoying a better life due to their wrongdoings.

The truth is that whilst the Emergence by some very complicated and oftentimes undetectable means (referred to as Karma) punishes offenders, few very powerful and smart people manage to get away with wrongdoings.

True, wrongdoing deteriorates trust and other valuable societal pillars, but what if the individual does not need "trust"? What if they rule using fear? What if they were anonymous? Or What if they were untouchable? Etc.

There is no end to the nightmare and havoc such people can cause for everyone, and that is why it is not sufficient to only do good, we must resist wrong.

If Karma was palpable like the earth under your feet, or even the air in your lungs, there wouldn't be a need for the constitution, law enforcement agencies, or even activists.

If you want Karma – if you want Justice – if you want your world to be a better place – then you must resist evil. You must not cover wrongdoers. You must speak and act against them.

In other words, you do not have to wait till the "Police brutality" affects your family before speaking up against it or even going on peaceful demonstrations. You must act as though what affects one affects all.

If Karma has been unresponsive, it is because good people have been silent.

An Arabic proverb: "They said to Pharaoh, 'what made you a Tyrant?' He said: 'No one stopped me'".

It is by unhappiness with the wrong that you become happy with the right - if wrong gets rewarded, then right becomes resented - society crumbles, and chaos ensues.

Be the Karma.

Make Worthy Causes Your Source Of Happiness

Think about sex: Even if you're a virgin, chances are you already know some living things (like humans) need to mate in order to reproduce. So, I want you to picture that process of mating. What do you see in the theater of your imagination?

...you see two people in a dimly lit room. The windows are left ajar and a gentle breeze whizzes cool rose-scented air into the room. They are both naked on a soft bed. Eye to eye. Shoulder to shoulder. Chest to breast. Hips to hips. Toe to toe. They kiss. The candle lights fade. Melodies of ecstasy ensue. Quivering. Satisfaction. A seed is planted. And in nine months' time, it is harvested. Umbilical cord cut. It is a happy healthy baby.

There is a thing about sex and reproduction that is universal, yet simple. Different entities interact with each other and the result is another entity.

When average people think about a good life; they most times envision cars, houses, and lots of children. They think about traveling, eating, and drinking. They think about all the expensive and exotic things they can enjoy. They think amiss.

A good life is like sex: There is you and then there is the other person. You need them to be pleased in order to be pleased yourself. The more care and attention you pay to pleasure them, the more they reciprocate. It is an experience you cannot self-generate. And sex is

an overture – it is a bridge – to something more fascinating, and important...sex brings babies into the world.

A good life must be an act of giving, throwing, and devoting your whole self to something with hopes of improving it, deriving immense happiness from the betterment of that thing, and having that mutual benefit birth something even more important. For instance, working on a business diligently, getting paid handsomely by that business, and having that business employ several other people whilst solving the problems of millions of others. It could also be deriving happiness in educating kindergarten children, getting paid for the job, and birthing the next generation of leaders and innovators.

A horrible life is a life that derives happiness from sapping the wellness of another thing, whilst killing off something important. For instance, becoming rich by swindling people, thereby destroying the reputation of your tribe, country, or race. It could also be driving happiness by becoming an extremist – oppressing, suppressing, and killing other people who differ in your view – looting and raping, and consequently destroying the leaders and innovators of tomorrow, whilst diminishing the vitality (if any) of those that remain.

...

There is something about [Elon Musk](#) that fascinates me (and a lot of people too) - how interested he is in saving the world. For example, he's actively reducing our dependence on fossil fuels by building electric cars and solar cities; and also striving to make multi-planetary travel (and existence) a possibility. Both endeavors (clean energy and multi-planetary existence) have the potential of saving the human race from extinction. Needless to say, both endeavors make him happy and more than feed and shelter him. He's a billionaire, has kids, and also has millions of fans/supporters. When he dies (i.e. if he doesn't figure out a way to make humans immortal) he surely would be remembered for a long time. That is what a good life looks like.

But, so you don't miss the point – the point that the relationship – the “sex” and birth of a “child” – is what matters, I'd share a story about a certain man I knew.

This man was a Mechanic and a Pastor. There was really nothing fascinating about both professions. But he was passionate (to the point of obsession) about being exactly those. He would make sure he fixed every fault a machine had (most times outdoing the paycheck). He didn't become a billionaire doing this, but he was happy with the money it generated because it enabled him to build his own house and raise his kids. As a Clergy, he was also very keen on rebuking people who hurt people, whilst teaching them to be good to each other. He was always happy to see that people behaved appropriately (according to the will of God). This job of directing people on how to better their lives (and consequently the society – since we were an Emergence) was so important to him that he also left a lasting impression in the hearts of many when he transitioned.

When you do the right things – i.e. when you make your happiness about the good of humanity, by engaging and investing in helpful projects and endeavors – there is no way you will not be rewarded, first on earth, then after death (depending on what you believe, this reward can be the respect accorded to your name, the support given to your family, or Heaven/Janna/Valhalla/add your paradise here.). And more importantly, your act would inspire others to do better.

That is what happens when you put your happiness on worthy courses. Do what is helpful, and you would be rewarded richly – you would be fulfilled and live a life that even kings would envy.

“Doing the right things for the right reasons in the right way is the key to Quality of Life!”

– Stephen Covey.

Above Happiness

When you understand that your wellness, goodness, growth, development, and life are very, very different from the whims of happiness and unhappiness, you would become unstoppable, and quite satisfied with the levels of happiness and unhappiness you experience day to day.

You would be able to

- Set your heart to difficult – but important – tasks, and have the resolve to see it come to pass, no matter the hurdles.
- Walk away from people, places, and things that poison your mind, spirit, and body, no matter the happiness they promise, and
- Basically, be more than just a pleasure receptacle or whimsical animal. Your life would have a purpose.

You would be able to think about where you want to be in life, outline all that is necessary, and then execute on those – whether you feel great happiness or unhappiness during the process.

Happiness and unhappiness start serving as merely colorful spectacles that you expect to decorate your well-thought-out decisions. They become parts of your emotional nourishments, just like all other rich emotional states that we experience (whether negative or positive). They become part of the thrilling experience. They don't toss you to and fro.

You stop acting like the people that Steve Jobs labeled “confused”, but rather become the Steve Jobs of your own life – **by rolling out a series of important, meaningful, and worthy courses/goals**. And your happiness would be in your hands. Now guided, with reason and a better understanding of your nature, and the relationship you have with the world (i.e. the Emergence), you find life more bearable.

Very little might change – both the feelings of happiness and unhappiness would continue to dwell in your heart – but at least you would not dwell on them, nor allow them to dictate your life, because

you know they are just feelings, and that a worthy course is what is most important.

This is how soldiers are able to go to war and lay down their lives for their country. They are not particularly thrilled to run towards grenades, poison gasses, and bullets. They are not thrilled to be tortured and sliced open by enemy forces. They have simply transcended happiness and unhappiness, and have placed their focus on the mission.

It is how Jesus was able to do it too. He wasn't thrilled to be disgraced, whipped, and nailed to a cross. He just knew it was worth it. He cried but still did it anyway.

It is how Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Mother Theresa, and all other great people we celebrate today did it.

It is how the kid who stays up all night reading does it. It is how the athlete who trains for years does it. It is how you too can do it.

Beyond Happiness

Once you cross the limitation of happiness and unhappiness – i.e. when you start doing things despite how they make you feel in the moment – you unlock experiences that are beyond happiness.

You unlock

- Gratitude (seeing the good despite the bad)
- Pride (delight in an accomplishment, or state of being)
- Serenity (acceptance of everything, with no intention to change or escape them)
- Enthusiasm (having no friction to go after what one wants despite the odds)
- Hope (being able to look beyond circumstances)

- Love (caring for something or someone even if you gain nothing in return)

I would have loved to go on to talk about all these amazing experiences, but then they are beyond happiness, and this short guide is about happiness.

The End.

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FOR READING
THIS BOOK**

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