

## **Book review: Happiness: Lessons From A New Science By Anthony**

“Happiness: Lessons From A New Science” is a groundbreaking book which denies the direct relationship between wealth and happiness in a scientific approach. What’s the most astounding part is that the author himself is an economist yet he dares to challenge the concept of the relation between affluence and satisfaction in economics and put forward the other elements that are indispensable to achieve real happiness. At the first sight, I thought it would be a book about the complicated psychology of humanities. My intuition, however, changed soon after my perusal of the first chapter of it. Reading this book certainly leaves us pondering the real meanings of life.

Happiness is something all of us yearn for and desire yet few of us ever achieve. It is characterized by feelings of gratitude, inner peace, satisfaction, and affection for ourselves and for others. Our most natural state of mind is one of contentment and joy. The barriers and obstructions which keep us from experiencing happiness are learned negative processes that we have innocently come to accept. When we uncover these inherent positive feelings, and remove the obstructions keeping us from them, the result is a more meaningful and beautiful expression of life. As the author suggests, the majority of people, however, seek in things which are evanescent and unreal. While human’s unlimited craving for success and wealth is omnipresent and should not be taken as culpable, the truth, however, is that no true happiness can ever be found in the senses but only in the spirit. Success and wealth brings only a fleeting satisfaction. The predominant urge of mankind for happiness impels men to struggle against the limitations and imperfections of life. It is in a word, the eternal craving for freedom. It is patently obvious that happiness has a blurred edge and we can’t simply define it by words. However, we can say that it is naturally related to a sense of contentedness, integration, fulfilment, wholeness or even grace and blessedness. These positive feelings are not fleeting emotions that “come and go” with changing circumstances, but permeate our lives and become part of us. Finding this state of mind allows us to be more light-hearted and easygoing, whether or not our circumstances seem to warrant this positive outlook. In this nicer state, life seems less complicated and our problems are lessened. The reasons are, when we feel better we have more access to our own wisdom and senses. We tend to be less reactive, defensive and critical; we make better decisions and we express ourselves more effectively. The question is, is money one of the cause of happiness? This subject is profusely discussed in this book.

This book explicitly introduce us the idea by employing some scientific examples that having more money doesn't necessarily mean that one will become happier. Before the invention of money, can we assume that all human beings are unhappy? True, having a certain amount of wealth can bring people satisfaction by providing them with the daily necessities or even luxuries. To a certain extent, money can thus provide people with happiness by eliminating their mental energy spent on worrying about the shortage of money. The author would like to inspire us with the fact that being wealthy doesn't necessarily guarantee happiness and that there have long been many misconceptions about money and these misconceptions prompt us to make more of it, regardless of whether the process brings unhappiness to us.

*"If your sole duty is to achieve the best for yourself, life just becomes too stressful, too lonely - you are set up to fail. Instead, you need to feel you exist for something larger, and that very thought takes off some of the pressure."* Reading this book persuades us to rethink whether we really need that much amount of it and introduce us the concept that having enough can bring us even more satisfaction than having more than enough in view of the fact that having more than enough brings us worries like how to economize the excess of our wealth. It refreshes our mind on how we should treat money and how we can live happily even we don't consider ourselves as having enough of it. It is in fact a relative concept—whether or not we have enough money depend very much on our material desires and the myriad of things we would like to accomplish. On the other hand, it rectifies our objectives in life. Is our only objective in life to enjoy things and our only purpose of getting money to indulge in whatever we enjoy? As the author reinstate, this selfishness of the feeblest kind will bring us nothing but sorrow and misery. Without contentment, life can seem like a battleground where we are too busy struggling with problems to enjoy life's beauty. Just as Jesus of Nazareth once said, *"Happy are those who hunger and thirst for what is right. They will be satisfied."*

*"A happy society has to be built on two foundations: first, the greatest level of sympathy for others, and, second, the strongest moral philosophy of impartiality."* Very few people choose to live the solitary life of a hermit and this type of confinement is often thought as a particularly harsh punishment. Relationships are fundamental to human nature, that's why happiness, to a certain extent, is dependent upon having good relationships with others. There are people who try, consciously or not, to undermine other people's happiness for purposes of their own. Just as what the author has reminded us, the sympathy is the driving force of a happy society and it's exactly impartiality which promotes the harmonious relationships between people of a society.

The messages conveyed by the writer in this book are quite compelling. While most of us have neglected the 5 indispensable element of living happily, namely family relationships, financial situation, work, community and friends and health, this book act as a navigation tool for us to realize and comprehend the happiness and real beauty in life. A contented feeling brings with it childlike enjoyment—a lighthearted way of being in the world that opens a channel of appreciation for simple things, to feel grateful for the magnificent gift of life itself.

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