

Happiness is...

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“I just want to be happy!”, she said. “That doesn’t seem too much to ask for, does it? After all, the “pursuit of happiness” is part of the U. S. Declaration of Independence!”

Yes, and...happiness is a tricky concept, and it can mean different things to different people. In fact, when asked, many people struggle to be able to describe what happiness means to them. Lots of people think that happiness is complete absence of problems, but I have seen a number of people with plenty of money, solid relationships, etc, who are unhappy.

While some people may think happiness means a complete absence of problems, my best guess is that happiness is less about the absence of something and more about the presence of something. I have met many people with very little in the way of material resources, but who have a passion that focuses their attention and helps them feel alive, and happy. I have met people who work long hours doing heartbreaking work who wouldn’t trade their work for anything. They are ‘happy’ with their lives.

I think happiness has to start with a vision – a goal we set for ourselves. Then, we get to experience ‘happiness’ over and over again as we conquer different hurdles on the way to our goal. I don’t think the goal has to be big. I think we just need to be able to have something we’re shooting for.

This is not to suggest that ‘happiness’ means that we must throw our whole selves into one all-consuming passion. A single-minded elite athlete isn’t necessarily happier than the rest of us. The difference is about choice and perspective. As much as possible, set your life up for yourself, and make your peace with those things out of your control.

So, what might make you happy?