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Terms such as happiness, subjective well-being, joy, overall well-being etc., are not further differentiated contrary to the actual slightly different definitions. In general these terms are used in the context of this book to describe the feeling of deep inner and general satisfaction with oneself and one's life.

Foreword

“Man is unhappy because he doesn't know he's happy; only because of that. It's everything, everything, Whoever learns will at once immediately become happy, that same moment...”

Fjodor Michailowitsch Dostojewski

If you read these pages, you are probably looking for a little more happiness, in the sense of satisfaction with life. And that is a very human need. The pursuit of happiness! People want to be happy. So you are not alone! Unfortunately the way to a more fulfilled and happier life is probably not as easy as Mr. Dostojewski describes it. Under no circumstances, however, an unattainable goal! We all carry the conditions to live a happy life. New perspectives and small changes in daily habits can change your life for the better and could bring a feeling of deep satisfaction into it.

And at the same time enriching the lives of your family, friends and relatives. You will find a basic overview of what it really takes to create a happy and satisfied life. Profound findings from scientific research in fields such as biology, psychology and general happiness research support the book's statements.

First of all, there is a small evaluation in the form of a few - apparently - simple questions, in order to determine what is going on around us and, above all, within us. You will also find further questionnaires from renowned happiness researchers for an even more detailed self-assessment in the appendix of the book. But for now, let's get started!

Table of Contents

Foreword	2
Table of Contents	3
Evaluation	4
1 Happiness - What's that?	5
2 Happiness & Science.....	9
3 Desoxyribonucleinacid (DNA) - Our Genetical Blueprint	14
4 Character, Principles & Behaviour of Happy People.....	20
5 Up & Down: Life is a Roller Coaster	34
6 Family - First Home.....	38
7 Work - Second Home.....	41
8 Health - Back again?	45
9 Nutrition - You are what you eat!.....	50
10 Thoughts - You are what you think!	54
11 Money - Precious Paper.....	62
12 Social Live - Humans are Social Beings	65
13 Final Thoughts	69
14 Appendix: Questionnaires on happiness	70
15 Bibliography.....	78

1 Happiness - What's that?

"Most folks are as happy as they make up their minds to be."

Abraham Lincoln

Is being happy actually something you can make up your mind to? That was at least Abraham Lincoln's point of view. And as we'll learn later, he was quite right considering the current state of research. Over the years, many clever people have taken a look at the question of what that feeling of happiness actually is and how it arises within us. As with many issues, it is advantageous for the human mind to get a definition at the beginning. So that it knows what it is dealing with. But defining happiness is just as difficult as describing the color of a chameleon. Because happiness is subjective and occurs in different ways depending on the very person and their attitudes. Like a chameleon, it changes shape and appearance according to destiny, external circumstances, inner attitudes and resources, as well as a lot of other factors. Nevertheless, a few general traits can be noted, since we humans are ultimately, even if we vehemently deny this in our youth, all of one kind and driven by similar needs, worries, motivations and fears.

The renowned happiness researcher Ruuth Veenhoven defines happiness as follows: "Happiness is the measure or degree to which a person is satisfied with the quality of his or her own life as a whole. In other words, happiness is the degree of how much you like your own life."¹ Sounds quite plausible, doesn't it? People feel happy when they are satisfied with their life and value its contents. Furthermore, happiness in life can be roughly divided into two categories. "Well-being" and "luck". In contrast to luck, which cannot be influenced and, for example, can rather be understood as a fortunate coincidence in the sense of a lottery win, (subjective) well-being describes the circumstances that can be influenced by personal decisions. Decisions like the choice of one's lifestyle, profession, partner and so on.²

In addition to this categorization, we must also distinguish between short-term and long-term happiness. The category of short-term happiness includes things like a bar of chocolate, a great movie or a luxurious trip. Long-term happiness, on the other hand, is rather a long-lasting and deep feeling of satisfaction with one's own life, which

does not depend on small things or situational circumstances in general. Of course, short-term happiness is much easier to achieve than long-term happiness. Just gobble some sweets and shortly afterwards your mood will rise. Unfortunately, it will return to the original level or even to a lower one afterwards, comparable to the work Sisyphus was told to do according to mythology. As soon as he rolled a giant rock up to a summit, full of joy of having finally made it this time, it already rolls backwards down again. And all the fun starts all over again. In order to avoid such ups and downs, it is worthwhile to arrange one's life in such a way that satisfaction increases in the long run and a constant, stable level of happiness will set in. Even if it means to learn something new, working on oneself and trying to get rid of old habits. Perhaps you might now be wondering whether such effort even has reasonable advantages or not. Definitely!

Ed Diener, also a renowned happiness researcher, points out in his publications on happiness and well-being that people with a high level of happiness enjoy better physical health, have better relationships, and are generally more helpful and productive.³

And not only that, people with a high life satisfaction, an optimistic attitude and those who sense positive feelings more often instead of negative emotions, can also enjoy a longer and healthier life.⁴

Even on a person's success at work, income, relationships, etc., the satisfaction and the subjective well-being has an influence. Not only because being successful can be a reason for happiness, but is also an actual cause of success.⁵

In addition, happy people, apart from helping themselves, do also contribute to a positive development of the whole human race, its cultures and economic aspects. Because, happy people are more productive and more willing to support their co-workers. For these reasons, happiness and its fostering, e.g. in school systems, is also a topic which not only regards each individual, but governments as well, says Diener.³

Now, besides a definition, we also need a method for measuring happiness in order to obtain a current state of it in our world. Happiness, previously defined as an apparently individual and intangible feeling, should even be measurable? Yes, as you have already been able to discover at the beginning of the book - assuming you haven't cheated your way past the questionnaire - even a few simple questions could give you a good overview of the current state.

In order to be able to take a professional look at one's own situation, three professional questionnaires from renowned happiness researchers (Diener et al.), including notes on evaluation, are available for you in the appendix to this book.

However, people often allow themselves to be influenced in their answers by fairly basic things, such as the current weather.¹ In order to obtain a somewhat better view of your current situation, it is recommended to complete these questionnaires more often and with different external influences (different places, times of day, weather conditions, etc.) to compensate short-term and situational influences. After getting started with navigating the map of happiness and being aware of one's state of mind you can devote yourself to the next questions in order to get closer to the goal - more satisfaction and happiness.

What does it take to make us really happy or rather really unhappy?

What is the point of knowing that so exactly?

How much influence do we have at all on increasing our happiness in life with our own resources and strength?

Some might think: money. If I only had enough money, I could do whatever I wanted to and spend my life in a frenzy or at least with a deep satisfaction. No wonder, money has a high value in our society, it promises freedom and being able to buy almost everything you can imagine. To buy a villa, a sports car, a yacht and eventually a bowl full of caviar. But does all this - besides an aquarium in your stomach - really go along with more satisfaction and happiness? 100 of the wealthiest Americans were asked about this topic and compared with a control group of the same size. The result was that the wealthier people achieved slightly higher levels of well-being than the not so wealthy one's.⁶

But be careful, if you hastily feel confirmed in your assumption that money makes us happy. In fact, you should read on. Because, the reason for the higher well-being none of the participants connected to money, but rather to a high self-esteem through the possibility of self-realization. Moreover, among these very wealthy people there were also some who considered themselves to be quite unhappy.⁶

The topic of wealth and money, however, will be dealt with in more detail in a later chapter.