

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

Professor Sarah Niblock, CEO of the UK Council for Psychotherapy, and UKCP psychotherapist Martin Weaver discuss the ways in which we interpret happiness – and how where we see happiness in the world can affect how we experience it and strive to achieve it



Happiness – and the things and people that make us happy

– is a focal point for many of us in life. But we can't be happy all the time. Happiness comes in peaks and troughs and, without the lower points, we wouldn't be able to appreciate those times of pure joy. In the accompanying podcast with psychotherapist Martin Weaver, I seek to find out about the influence others have on our capacity to feel happiness.

Sarah
CEO of the UK Council for Psychotherapy

Happiness is a subjective experience. It's a sense of pleasure, wellbeing and joy. We can feel it innately but our sense of happiness is often influenced by who and what surround us.

When we grow up, we see what brings joy to those closest to us and that's where we develop much of our understanding of happiness. This continues throughout life – we notice what makes other people happy, which influences our thoughts about how we believe we can achieve that sense of joy.

We are not solely influenced by the people around us – everything we watch, listen to and read reinforces our ideas of happiness. This is most apparent in advertising, where we are shown happiness in terms of what businesses want to sell us!

All these factors can create pressure to achieve a certain level of happiness and the external pressures reinforce internal pressures. When we feel grounded and confident, we can separate ourselves and our definition

of happiness from other people and their definition of happiness. The negative sensations that can result, for example people telling us that what makes us happy is wrong, doesn't have to be a negative experience where we question our thoughts on happiness, it can be an opportunity to look inward and check in with ourselves.

Remember that you choose your values and beliefs. When you are challenged or feel influenced, think differently and try to come back to yourself to define what makes you happy. By having a better relationship with ourselves, we can have a better relationship with happiness, questioning in a curious way and taking the time to listen keeps us in touch with what uniquely bring us joy.

If you find your relationship with happiness difficult in general, therapy can help. It is a space for curiosity, where you can look at your values and what brings you joy. Therapy gives you the space to acknowledge the negative, but also the positive, such as your capacity for resilience and happiness.



Listen to the podcast

How do we know whether our sense of happiness is defined by us or the world around us? At times when we let others be responsible for defining our happiness, we may deny our role in our own happiness. But what can

we do to ensure a better relationship with our happiness? UKCP's Martin Weaver and Sarah Niblock discuss this fascinating topic in this month's podcast. Listen at psychologies.co.uk/happiness-podcast-ukcp



Explore authentic happiness for you

Questions to ponder as you consider what happiness means in your life:

- 1** Write down a few words that define happiness for you. Where do you feel happy? Who do you feel happy with? What activities bring you joy?
- 2** Where does your sense of happiness come from? Growing up, what influenced your world view and sense of happiness?
- 3** Who influences your happiness – members of your family, friends or partners? Ask yourself: Do I choose to be around this person because they make me happy or am I around this person because I am happy? Both may be true.
- 4** What external factors influence your happiness? Looking at Instagram is a great example – if you scroll and compare yourself to others, this is a sign to get more in tune with your personal definition of happiness, not the users that you are observing.
- 5** Ask: Am I in touch with myself? Being in touch with yourself and your definition of happiness is crucial. If you feel out of touch with your thoughts and feelings, then you are out of touch with your happiness.



How I became a therapist

Martin Weaver's life experiences were the catalyst behind his choice to become a psychotherapist

Growing up as a gay man amid the Aids crisis of the 1980s gave me a secure sense of myself, resilience and empathy for the distress and pain of others. These factors led me to psychotherapy as a career.

It took time before I found the philosophy that best suits my beliefs and values, which I recognised in constructivism

via neurolinguistic programming (NLP).

I have an interest in the 'hows' of life; how we interpret our experiences, how we put our values and beliefs into practice and how we came to have those values and beliefs. I offer options and new perspectives and, as an extrovert, have the ability to fully engage with clients.

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About UKCP and how to find a therapist

The UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) is the leading research, innovation, educational and regulatory body working to advance psychotherapy for the benefit of all. We have a register of more than 8,000 individual members who offer a range of therapy approaches for couples, individuals, families and groups.

We also have over 70 training and accrediting organisations for those who wish to become therapists. To find the right therapist for you, or learn how to become a therapist, visit psychotherapy.org.uk

