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# The Fortunate Times of Happiness in Our Lives and Theories Behind This

## Happiness

Suffering is the default state of human existence, to exist is to suffer and it is unavoidable. Fortunately, there are times where we will not suffer, also known as happiness. So, how does one maximize happiness? Many theories have been suggested on how to maximize happiness, and I believe the theory closest to the truth would be Siddhārtha Gautama's belief, also known as Buddha, who believed that in order to be happy, one had to live in the moment. He was a man born into luxury and royalty, but he left that life because he did not believe material possessions was life's end goal. He concluded that one should limit their Earthly desires because that can bring on past regret or anticipations on an uncertain future. Suffering is inevitable, but if we live in the moment it is possible to be truly happy.

"Stop and take a deep breath," words that my father told me when I was eight or nine that still echo in my head till this day. The reason why I was upset back then was silly, but the message my father sent me was very important, every once in awhile you need to take a step back and enjoy the moment. In recent years, people seem to be more and more attached to their phones, computers, and other forms of instant communication and gratification. Unfortunately, while instant communication is a good thing, dependence upon it can take us away from the scenery and decrease our happiness. Last year when I was vacationing in Honolulu, around the Kaaawa beach area, and a younger girl around her early teens was complaining to her father about the lack of cell service. While I too am guilty of using my phone in beautiful places, it can bring unnecessary desires such as the need to post a snapchat every hour, which in turn can lead to unhappiness if internet connection is lost. If she took a step back and saw how fortunate she was to be in Hawaii, she might have been happier.

A prevalent theory that pertains to happiness would be the idea that a partner is needed in the equation of happiness. I believe that this theory is far from the truth. Christopher McCandless, in the movie *Into the Wild* directed by Sean Penn, is about a young adult who sets off on an adventure to find out what life is about. While I do agree with the movie's message on finding yourself and enjoying nature, I do not believe that happiness exists only when shared. It is true that we are naturally a species that flourishes because we live in communities, but that is not essential to happiness. Christopher Knight, a hermit who lived in isolation for 27 years, said it the best, "If you like solitude, you are never alone," we do not need other beings if we truly do not want to be with anyone else (Finkel 1). To live in isolation is a difficult, and Knight admits it is difficult to live on your own because you become the sole provider of your every need. But, Knight felt complete, "He was attuned to the completeness of his own presence rather than to the absence of others" (Finkel 1). Knight was able to fulfill his basic human desires and rid himself of the extras, non-essential for survival, and was able to feel complete - happy.

Another prevalent theory would be the idea that one can only experience happiness when life is complete. Philosophers such as Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas believe that it is only at the end of life, or post life, when one could truly experience happiness. I believe that these theories are incorrect simply because our brain is wired to experience pleasure, dopamine is released

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whenever our brain believes we deserve an award. Runner's High, the feeling of euphoria while running, is an example of our ability to feel happy long before we are laying on our death beds. Sex and drugs are another example of our ability to feel happiness before our time is up. What both examples have in common is the mindset of being in the moment, which the person to feel happy.

In order to be happy we need to embrace the moment. Suffering is natural and when experiencing the harsh reality of life, it is good idea to look ahead and hope for the best. That being said, no one should focus all their time on the future because it is uncertain. Likewise, nothing lasts forever and one can not look back at the "good times" with the expectation for them to happen all over again. Fortunately, there will be times where we can experience happiness, and during these times one needs to take a step back and enjoy the moment.

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