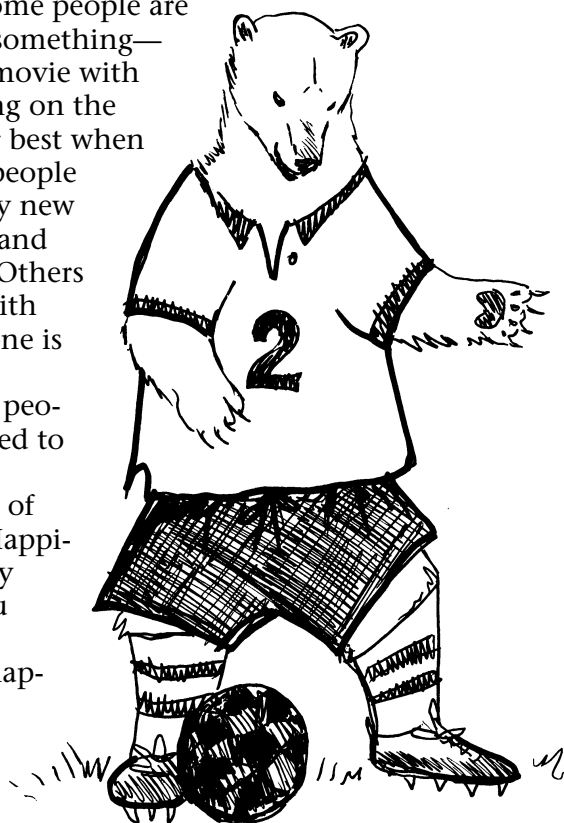


Chapter 15

Where Does Happiness Come From?

What makes you happy? Some people are happiest when they are doing something—like playing soccer, going to a movie with friends, or practicing a new song on the piano. Some people are at their best when they are relaxing alone. Some people love to go to new places and try new things—like hopping on a bus and taking a ride to another town. Others are happy just to be at home with someone close to them. Everyone is different.

We haven't met very many people who told us that they wanted to be unhappy. If you listen long enough, you will hear all kinds of expressions about happiness. Happiness comes from within. Money can't buy happiness. When you make others happy you will become happy yourself. And, happiness is an end not a means. Although these expressions mean different things, they all point to the same idea. Happiness is found inside of



you, and is not gained from outside sources. Happiness is not something that money buys. And happiness is not a something to seek after—the person that you are, the way you live your life, will bring you happiness.

What do you think? What makes you happiest?

What Makes You Happy?

People find happiness from many sources. One way is not necessarily better than the other way. People are simply different. Here are some possibilities. Remember, these will vary for each of you. Look at the list. Is there anything missing?

- ☞ *When I volunteer at the children's hospital I feel really good. People need me there. I can go to visit a child who just came out of some serious surgery and make him or her smile and laugh. Making them happy makes me happy. I can say, Hey, I'm a kid too and I know you're going to be fine. I look forward to it, even though it's hard sometimes.*
- ☞ *My dad takes me out for breakfast twice a month. It's just the two of us. After we eat we usually do something outside—like go swimming or ride bikes. We don't even have to say too much, I just like being around him.*
- ☞ *I am the happiest when I am listening to my favorite music. Sometimes it gives me new ideas. I'm not musical myself. I tried to learn to play the keyboards but I was really bad. I just love to lay back and listen to music.*
- ☞ *My favorite thing in the whole world is to go cross country skiing with my big sister. She and her husband have this cabin in Massachusetts and I stay with them for a week after Christmas every year. When I am out in the woods with the whiteness in every direction and the sun shining I feel like I could do anything. I never want to come back inside. It's like it's just the earth and I.*

Taking a closer look at the list above, we can see that people find happiness in many ways. In other words, people are happiest:

- ☞ **Serving other people.** *Some people want to help others. You can see this from the person who helps someone who has dropped his books in the hallway all the way to the person who becomes a nurse or a doctor (just to name a few). Can you think of other professions of serving?*

- ☉ **Listening to music or looking at art.** *Some people love music and art (or one or the other). This includes people who simply listen to music and look at art as well as those who actually create it. These people often have a profound appreciation for beauty.*
- ☉ **Spending time with others.** *Some people need very little more than to be with someone they enjoy.*
- ☉ **Being in nature.** *The greatness and beauty of the natural world can inspire some people for days! Whether it is looking at the earth from the top of a mountain, walking through a field of wildflowers or playing in the snow, these people are happiest outdoors.*

Of course, this is a very incomplete list. With your class, try to think of other ways in which people find happiness. We are sure that you will be able to come up with many more examples.

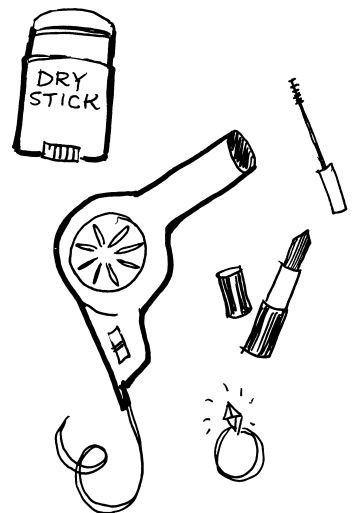
It is also important to keep in mind that a person may find happiness in many ways, not just in one way or another.

Happiness and the Material World

Most of us see lots of things advertised—fancy running shoes, beautiful clothes, cars, sports equipment... and we may think, *I would sure like that!* When you watch commercials on TV, companies hope you will think, *That's just what I need, I can't be happy without it.* That's where you come in.

There is nothing wrong with wanting nice things. The problem comes when you think that you cannot be happy without a certain item—let's say the latest jeans. You will feel miserable until you get the jeans. But somehow, soon after you buy the jeans, some other item pops up on the market. Everyone has it. You want it. You are miserable until you are able to buy it. The cycle continues. Advertisers are aware of this. That is why they market their items to you the way they do. They make the item seem all-important. And you want it. That is how they make money.

It is natural to have desires. It is a problem, though, if you are overpowered by your desires so that you can't stop thinking about them or



you do things that are wrong in order to achieve them. It is important for you to realize that this cycle often exists so you aren't controlled by your desires.

A young man in prison told us this story.

When I had just turned 18 I held up a convenience store a few miles away from my house. I thought, 'I don't know anyone there, I won't hurt anyone, I'll just get the money and split, it will be over in a jiff.' I was wrong. I wanted the money because we were really poor, I dropped out of high school and I couldn't get a great job just like that. I knew other guys in my neighborhood who robbed people or shops, and none of them got caught. I was tired of wearing old clothes and feeling low. I thought it would be easy and that I could somehow be better if I had a little more money in my pocket. I felt like such a loser.

Anyhow, I walked in, with a ski mask on, and held a gun to this man's face. I told him to give me the money, and he did... but it took him a long time. I was sweating and thinking how stupid I was the whole time. I felt sorry for the guy I was robbing, he was totally afraid. He didn't do anything to me, he didn't deserve what I was doing to him. Anyhow, the police got there as I was running through the parking lot and I was arrested. It was the stupidest thing I ever did in all my life, and now I'm paying for it. I thought one quick robbery couldn't hurt anyone, but it did. It hurt a lot of people—me included.

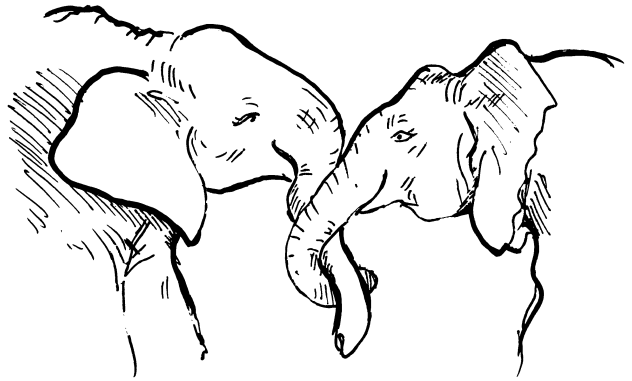
James felt left out. He wanted the things that his friends had. He thought that having some extra cash in his pocket would bring him something he wanted—new clothes, and perhaps a little more attention. His friends got away with quick robberies, so why wouldn't he? Then he would have that extra cash. In a round-about kind of way, he thought the money he stole would help him to be happier. If you were friends with James and you knew how he felt, what would you say to him?

What Money Can't Buy

Would you agree that there are some things that money can't buy? Close your eyes for a second and try to think of as many things as possible that fall into this category. You may have thought of things such as: *love, happiness, friends, family, memories* and so on.

When we are feeling rather badly because we want something material that we can't afford, it is tempting to think that if we just had more money we would be happy. But some of the wise people

who have lived before us have told us that it just isn't so. The truth is that money, in and of itself, does not make people happy. We are not saying that you do not need basic things, or that you should become a penniless hermit who lives in the woods, eating berries and nuts. We are suggesting that if you feel that your happiness depends on how much money you have, you may be wrong.



What do you have that money cannot buy? Think about your life for a moment. Can you make a mental list of all of the things you value that do not come to you because of money? Some items on your list may be things like your relationships, or the feeling you have after achieving something you worked very hard to earn, or a special talent or dream... all of these things are a big part of you, and none of them can be bought or sold. Here is a list we came up with, and we suspect that some of the items on our list of *what money can't buy* may be similar to yours:

- ⌚ *Honesty*
- ⌚ *Respect*
- ⌚ *Hard work and accomplishment*
- ⌚ *Love*
- ⌚ *Health*
- ⌚ *Friendship*
- ⌚ *A good attitude*
- ⌚ *Happiness*
- ⌚ *Peace of mind*

Does Happiness Come from Within?

Some people say that happiness comes from within a person. You may also feel happiness when you receive something that you have wanted for a long time. You may feel happy when someone

takes notice of your abilities. You may feel happy when you do well on a test you studied hard for. Although you may have experiences that you truly enjoy, it is not exactly those things that make you happy.

Inner peace is the origin of real happiness. Peace comes from liking yourself and knowing who you are. It also comes from living a meaningful life, and working to be your best. It is also about making and achieving your goals. The two go together—the inner and the outer. If you feel good about yourself and you live by what is most important to you, you will have something that many people seek: peace and happiness.



Journal

The fastest way to be happy is to make someone else happy. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Give reasons why.



To Do

1. 'Money is neither good nor bad, it depends on how you use it.' Can you think of positive ways in which money can be spent? Can you think of destructive ways?
2. Make a list of the five things that you need and want but cannot buy with money (for example, love, happiness, friends). What would you do without these things? Could having money to buy all the things you want make up for not having one of these things? From your list of five items, take four items away, one by one, until you are left with only one thing. This should be the one thing you absolutely could not live without. As a class, talk about the one thing that you and your classmates have chosen. Have many of you chosen the same things? Do you have a general agreement in your class about what is the most important, non-material, thing in the world?



Key Ideas

- ☉ People experience happiness from different activities.
- ☉ True happiness comes from within.
- ☉ Money cannot buy happiness, love or other vital things that we don't want to live without.



**Love is a fruit in season at all times,
and within reach of every hand.**

Mother Teresa

