



The Successful Pursuit of Happiness

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In the pursuit of happiness there are two things that are important: success and friendship.

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Are you happy? There are few things as important as being happy. In fact, happy people are not only a lot better at what they do; they also care more about others and are less affected by setbacks. We should therefore make the pursuit of happiness our primary goal in life.

The first point to realise is that you are part of a physical universe and the nature of this universe means there are certain rules you cannot escape. There is no point in denying those rules. They are not complicated and once you understand and utilise them you have a better chance at finding what you are looking for.

If the pursuit of happiness is your goal then there are two key rules:

- Opposites: the universe is interplay between opposites. For all of us this means a constant dance between those things that pull us down and have the potential to destroy us and those things that create stability. Being happy means consistently moving away from those things that will eventually scatter our particles across the universe.
- You need success avoiding and winning over the negative.
- Cause and effect: everything follows the law of cause and effect. Everything that happens is caused by something and is also the cause of something else. In the pursuit of happiness this means you need to understand what causes a decline of happiness in you, and what it is that will protect you from the negative and provide you with stability and growth. True friendship is one of the primary ingredients to finding happiness in life because friends can bring all their own experiences, skills and resources to support you when you find yourself on a slippery slope.

Success

In the pursuit of happiness, success is like climbing a ladder. At the bottom of the ladder are the monsters you want to avoid. The monsters represent all kinds of suffering. The higher you

can climb the ladder, the safer you are from the monsters.

Climbing the ladder means achieving success in gaining money, possessions, knowledge, understanding and friendships. Money gives you access to resources like food, shelter and clothing but it also opens up additional opportunities. Possessions help create stable environments and enable you to do things more easily such as using a car to get around. Knowledge and understanding helps you to better anticipate and plan for future events as well as deal with past events so they don't pull you down. Friendships give you access to additional resources such as money, possessions, knowledge, understanding and support as well as opportunities to achieve success.

To get higher up the ladder requires the luck of avoiding bad luck. Bad luck is when a ladder strut breaks and you fall - you lose your job, become ill, run into legal trouble, miss an opportunity and so on. You therefore need to climb as high as possible so you have space on the ladder to regain your footing in case you fall.

Friendship

The pursuit of happiness requires other people to help you. Friends not only help you climb the ladder but they can catch you when you fall. The more friends you have, and the more intimate those friendships, the more help and support you will have on the ladder.

The key benefits offered by friendship are this:

- You have access to additional resources. Your friends might help you out financially, you might be able to borrow things from them that you need and they might open doors for you to gain the resources you need. E.g. they might help you get a better paying job.
- Friends give you access to additional knowledge, experience and wisdom. With friends you don't only have your own limited knowledge and perspective on things but you have access to all the knowledge and experiences they've picked up in their lives as well. This vastly improves your chances of working out what the best strategy is to find true happiness.
- Friends offer support. Support means sharing the load. When things go wrong and the monsters try to pull you down support becomes a critical part of winning the battle. This support is not only externally, where friends offer support in troublesome circumstances, but internally as well where they support you emotionally.

Options

There are three basic options available to you in your pursuit of happiness. They are different

strategies people choose and their success is dependent on the amount of luck a person has. These strategies are:

- You can climb the ladder without support from friends. If your luck holds you can get up the ladder high enough, so falling a couple of struts now and then does not matter. This is a somewhat lonely strategy.
- This is the pursuit of fame, power and wealth and the expense of all other things.
- You can abandon the effort to climb the ladder. If you can build enough intimate friendships you will have the support needed so you do not fall. It's a risky strategy if you are close to the bottom.
- This is the pursuit of idleness.
- You can climb the ladder sensibly: climb without being obsessive about success and have enough close friends to help and support you in case things go wrong.
- This is the pursuit of contentment.

All three require enough luck to avoid the bad luck that might get you into the monster's jaws.

Of course, we create our own opportunities and with more opportunities we have a better chance at getting lucky. This is where the right kind of attitude comes in. Attitude is defined as the way in which you think, feel and behave. In the pursuit of happiness you therefore also need to find the right attitude