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JOYNOMICS: THE STUDY OF JOY AND PROGRESS

JOYNOMICS:TM THE STUDY OF JOY AND PROGRESS

MATT KILLINGSWORTH PH.D.



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Johnnie Walker® has commissioned **Joynomics: The Study of Joy and Progress** to support the launch of its *Joy Will Take You Further* campaign.

Joy Will Take You Further presents a new perspective on personal progress – the defining philosophy of **Johnnie Walker** – and looks to show that finding joy in the journey can help people achieve the success they seek.

This study has been written by Matt Killingsworth Ph.D. on behalf of **Johnnie Walker**. It is a review of the science of happiness and the potential role that joy can play in inspiring progress. Any reference to or citation of studies by anyone other than Matt Killingsworth Ph.D. in no way implies endorsement of **Johnnie Walker** or its activities.

DR MATT KILLINGSWORTH

Matt Killingsworth is a US-based psychologist and scientist who is also trained in economics and engineering. Matt's work aims to understand the causes and consequences of human happiness.

He is the creator of **www.trackyourhappiness.org**, a large-scale scientific project that uses smartphones to study happiness in real-time during everyday life. Matt earned a Ph.D. in Psychology at Harvard University, and a B.S.E. at Duke University with majors in Electrical Engineering, Biomedical Engineering, and Economics.



JOYNOMICS™: THE STUDY OF JOY AND PROGRESS

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INTRODUCTION

“KEEPING POSITIVE AND FINDING THE JOY EVERY DAY IN THE JOB THAT I DO IS PART OF MY PHILOSOPHY.”

JUDE LAW, MASTER OF ALL STAGES

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps more than anything else in life, people want happiness. Whether you prefer to call it happiness, contentment, well-being, satisfaction, or something else, there is a state that is so desirable that Aristotle described it as “the chief good toward which all other things aim”.

In our daily lives, we often think that happiness will follow success. Study hard, work hard, secure a promotion, buy a new car – achieve all that and then, surely, we’ll be happy. We invest a tremendous amount of time and energy trying to progress and achieve these objective markers of success.

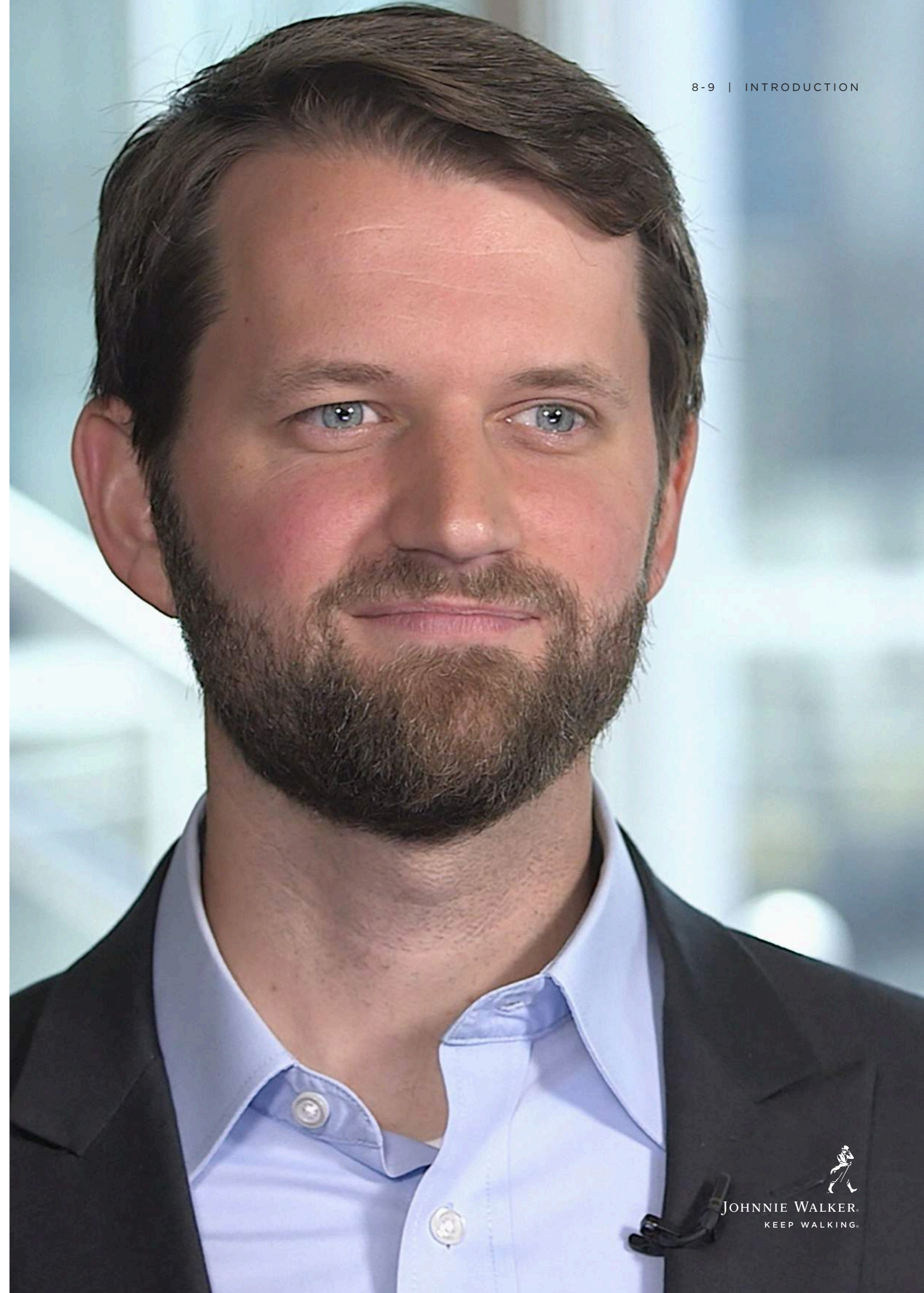
Yet when people actually climb the ladder of success, happiness is not necessarily there to greet them. People increasingly report feeling busy, overworked, and stressed. The objective conditions of people’s lives have improved dramatically over the past 50 years—with advancements in medicine, technology, and access to resources, among others—but happiness has not increased in proportion. In fact, in some developed countries including the U.S. and Great Britain, it has not increased at all.

What are we doing wrong? Is there something about human nature that prevents us from achieving contentment? Or is the conventional wisdom about how to achieve it just wrong?

There appears to be another way. In recent decades, it has become increasingly clear happiness can actually fuel success. Scientific studies show that when people are happier, they are more productive, more collaborative, and more creative. They are more resilient in the face of challenges, and better liked by those around them. While we can’t necessarily be happy all the time, the broad range of benefits happiness offers gives us a new reason to pursue happiness at work and in life.

The following paper reviews and reflects on the science of happiness and its relationship to success and progress. It helps us to understand the challenges of the old approach and reviews the scientific basis for the alternative that *Joy Will Take You Further*.

Matt Killingsworth Ph.D.



“SCIENTIFIC STUDIES SHOW THAT WHEN PEOPLE ARE HAPPIER, THEY ARE MORE PRODUCTIVE, MORE COLLABORATIVE, AND MORE CREATIVE.”

MATT KILLINGSWORTH PH.D.



1. PROGRESS - TO BE ENJOYED OR ENDURED?



“OK GO’S WHOLE CAREER HAS PRETTY MUCH BEEN DRIVEN BY JOY, IT’S KIND OF LIKE THE ENGINE BEHIND ALL THE STUFF WE MAKE.”

OK GO, SOUND EXPLORERS AND MUSIC VIDEO PIONEERS.



1. PROGRESS - TO BE ENJOYED OR ENDURED?

Conventional wisdom holds that success brings happiness. We tend to believe that if we progress through a set of objective milestones in life by securing better jobs, winning promotions, increasing our incomes and accumulating wealth, for example, then we will be happier. In fact, these indicators are often used as proxies for happiness due to the simple fact that, historically, we thought happiness itself could not be measured – something we now know is incorrect. Measuring happiness by measuring incomes, status attainment or life progress might seem reasonable. But is it right?

If happiness simply reduces to these objective markers of prosperity, it should be the case that nations that experience a significant rise in prosperity also experience a significant rise in happiness. Surprisingly, that is not what the evidence shows. In fact, while people on average have much more money than they had in the past (even after controlling for inflation), they are not much, if at all, happier. For example, in the latter part of the 20th Century, incomes rose dramatically in countries including the US and Great Britain.¹ However, social surveys in those countries during that period recorded no such upturn in the happiness of their citizens.

Between the early 1970s and the late 1990s, the proportion of Americans defining themselves as “very happy” actually fell from 34% to 30%. In Britain, the percentage claiming to be “very satisfied” with life plateaued over the same three decades.²

The happiness of a country as a whole does not seem to necessarily track with its long-term changes in prosperity. But what about individuals? Does an individual's success make that person happy? It might be tempting to assume that higher incomes lead to greater happiness. There is little doubt that, for those who make very little, income matters.

“MEASURING HAPPINESS BY MEASURING INCOMES, STATUS ATTAINMENT OR LIFE PROGRESS MIGHT SEEM REASONABLE. BUT IS IT RIGHT?”

MATT KILLINGSWORTH PH.D.

A little bit can go a long way towards lifting an individual out of poverty.³ However, after a certain basic living standard is attained, additional income is not associated with much improvement in one's subjective well-being. Indeed, some evidence suggests that the reality of being a high earner - such as working late hours and enduring long commutes - are some of the very things that undermine individual happiness.

The failure of money to promote happiness is perhaps most evident in studies of the happiness people experience in their day-to-day lives. Although studies have found that people with higher incomes sometimes do report greater satisfaction with their lives when they step back to reflect, high earners are not much happier than lower earners in their moment-to-moment experience. In fact, they tend to be more tense, and they do not spend more time doing enjoyable activities.⁴

Analysis of the relationship between age and happiness further undermines the idea that attaining success brings happiness. Most people achieve more materially - in terms of pay increases and promotions - as their working lives progress. But does their happiness follow the same path? The weight of scientific research says no.

There is some evidence that happiness remains at a steady level throughout working years.⁵ Other evidence suggests a U-shaped relationship, with a higher happiness level at the outset of adult life, which falls steadily to a trough from mid-30s to early-50s, before rising again around retirement.⁶ Whether remaining constant throughout working life or dipping in middle age, the research doesn't paint a picture of happiness following serenely in the wake of success or progress.

Our sense of happiness has a complicated relationship to our traditional notion of progress. While we spend much of our lives pursuing things like money and promotions, the reality is that these objective markers of success have only modest relationships to happiness.

According to a Regus Survey in 2012; "Half the people in the world say they are more stressed than they were last year. Chinese are the most stressed people in the world, with 75% of the mainland Chinese workers say their stress feeling has been growing in the past year." In the context of the survey results in China, it is worth noting that they correspond with a period of spectacular economic growth. Two years later, in 2014, the Ipsos Global Trends report found that: "46% of people in the world say they feel under a lot of pressure to be successful and make money."

When Scotch whisky brand **Johnnie Walker** conducted in-depth interviews with individuals around the world in 2014, people's comments revealed a common theme around how this pressure manifests itself:

"WHEN YOU START OFF AND ARE EARLY IN YOUR CAREER, YOU CONSTANTLY HAVE TO PROVE YOURSELF. IT'S ABOUT PROVING YOURSELF TO EVERYONE - YOUR PEERS, YOUR GIRLFRIEND, YOUR EMPLOYER."

- STEFAN, 27, US, PRIVATE WEALTH MANAGER

"THERE'S ALWAYS PRESSURE TO KEEP UP WITH YOUR FRIENDS. LIKE, EVERYONE WANTS TO BUY AN APARTMENT IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY - SOMEWHERE IN EUROPE."

- CARLOS, 27, VENEZUELA, FINANCIAL ADVISOR

"FOR ME THERE IS DEFINITE ANXIETY ABOUT PROGRESSING, THERE IS A COMPONENT OF TICKING TIME. I FEEL LIKE I SHOULD HAVE DONE THIS BY THIS TIME OR THIS AGE."

- JOAQUIN, 30, CHILE, CONSULTANT

So is this the only way? Does progress have to be an exercise in endurance or can an injection of happiness in our journey help deliver the success we seek and leave us with a greater sense of well-being once we get there?

“OUR SENSE OF HAPPINESS HAS A COMPLICATED RELATIONSHIP TO OUR TRADITIONAL NOTION OF PROGRESS. WHILE WE SPEND MUCH OF OUR LIVES PURSUING THINGS

LIKE MONEY AND PROMOTIONS, THE REALITY IS THAT THESE OBJECTIVE MARKERS OF SUCCESS HAVE ONLY MODEST RELATIONSHIPS TO HAPPINESS.”

MATT KILLINGSWORTH PH.D.



2. JOY WILL TAKE YOU FURTHER

"...IT'S OUR BIGGEST JOY IN LIFE TO ACCOMPLISH SOMETHING THAT NOBODY THOUGHT COULD BE DONE."

EVA HÅKANSSON, THE WORLD'S FASTEST INVENTOR ON THREE WHEELS



2. JOY WILL TAKE YOU FURTHER

Individuals and organizations focus on achieving conventional markers of success under the assumption that happiness will follow. Yet evidence is challenging that assumption. Conventional progress doesn't necessarily come with a guarantee of well-being.

Rather than viewing happiness as something we can only attain once we are successful, could we instead ask whether happiness can actually help promote success itself? Are those who prioritize happiness in addition to other goals better placed to succeed? Do they have an edge over those who focus only on hitting conventional milestones?

A wide array of studies on happiness supports the idea that happy people tend to outperform less happy ones.¹ For example, people who report greater well-being are more likely to be selected for job interviews, more likely to receive positive evaluations from supervisors, and are more productive. People with higher well-being also tend to be healthier, engage in more voluntary work, and have better social relationships.

Of course, in some cases, happier people may be more successful because aspects of success may cause happiness. What evidence is there that happiness causes success? As it turns out, happiness promotes certain ways of thinking and behaving that have the potential to enhance people's chances of success in a variety of domains.

For example, scientists have found that when people are happier, they think in broader ways that allow them to make associations they might not have otherwise made, boosting creativity.² Similarly, happier people tend to be better liked by others, more resilient, more prosocial and generous, healthier and engage in more healthy behaviors; they tend to experience less conflict at work, and there is some evidence that happier people are better at solving problems.³

“CONVENTIONAL PROGRESS DOESN'T NECESSARILY COME WITH A GUARANTEE OF WELL-BEING.”

MATT KILLINGSWORTH PH.D.

“A WIDE ARRAY OF STUDIES ON HAPPINESS SUPPORTS THE IDEA THAT HAPPY PEOPLE TEND TO OUTPERFORM LESS HAPPY ONES.”

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Longitudinal evidence also supports the idea that happiness leads to greater success. For example, a large study of students found that those who were happier at age 18 tended to have secured better jobs and be more financially secure eight years later.⁴

Consistent with this evidence, studies also suggest that joy can deliver success on an organizational level. Service departments with happy leaders are more likely to receive high ratings from customers⁵, and manufacturing companies with happy CEOs are more likely to have employees who report being happy, which in turn may boost productivity and profitability.⁶

It is increasingly clear that prioritizing happiness leads to more than just feeling good; it has the potential to help us succeed in ways we care about, both as individuals and groups.

3. LIVING WITH JOY

"I THINK THAT AS LONG AS WE HAVE FUN IN OUR JOBS IT JUST SHOWS, IT IS INFECTIOUS, YOU JUST MAKE IT A JOYFUL EXPERIENCE."

HAAS&HAHN, TRANSFORMERS OF NEIGHBOURHOODS

3. LIVING WITH JOY

While there is a growing body of research into happiness, translating the findings into practical action - whether on the part of individuals or organisations - requires that we have the tools to accurately assess the happiness of people, groups and indeed nations.

As recently as a few decades ago, many scientists doubted whether happiness could be quantified.

Since then, an abundance of new research has advanced our understanding of how to effectively measure happiness. In no small part, this is due to the advent of new measurement techniques ranging from asking people to reconstruct the elements of their day¹ to using smartphone technology to capture people's experiences of their lives², enabling researchers to better understand the causes and consequences of happiness.³

As we have learned how to measure happiness, the subject is increasingly being taken seriously by organisations on a global scale.

For example, this year, the United Nations is identifying a new set of global targets to urge world leaders to do more to balance their economic, social and environmental objectives, and is currently drawing up a universal monitoring framework to measure implementation of these Sustainable Development Goals over the next 15 years. The experts drawing up the UN framework are exploring alternative measures of sustainable development to complement GDP (Gross Domestic Product), and one option they have considered is subjective well-being — in other words, a happiness index.⁴ Whether or not this comes to fruition, this on-going process offers tangible evidence of the degree to which the study of happiness is gaining traction and recognition.

One of the leading advocates of the inclusion of a happiness measure in the new UN monitoring framework is the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), a UN-established independent network of academic research centres.⁵ The SDSN broke new ground in 2012 when it published a survey of global happiness—the World Happiness Report—championing the use of well-being as a measure to track the progress of nations.⁶ The landmark document in 2012 has been followed by two subsequent editions, in 2013 and 2015, which have captured the attention of the media and people around the world.

“RESEARCHERS IN RECENT DECADES HAVE FOCUSED THEIR INVESTIGATIONS ON HOW TO BEST TO ENGENDER GREATER WELL-BEING.”

MATT KILLINGSWORTH PH.D.



“THERE IS AN INCREASING FOCUS ON HAPPINESS AND A SENSE THAT IT CAN BE INTENTIONALLY PURSUED.”

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There is an increasing focus on happiness and a sense that it can be intentionally pursued. But while individuals may see the potential benefits of a joyful approach to life, that doesn't necessarily mean they find it easy to apply the concept to their own lives.

That's because, at an individual level, a straightforward idea doesn't always translate into straightforward action. No one sets out to be unhappy. Some people who lead a less joyful existence would probably like to change. Within the sphere of personal control, it seems likely that the greater barrier to happiness is not that people don't want to be happy, but that they're unsure how to become happier.

It's not a question that's been overlooked by scientists. A number of researchers in recent decades have focused their investigations on how to best to engender greater well-being.⁷ Here are four approaches to consider:

1. Don't take things for granted - Humans are supremely good at adapting. This extreme adaptability allows us to inhabit both the arctic and the equator, to learn complicated languages, and acquire skills we were not born knowing. It also allows us to adapt to negative events. Losing one's job or getting divorced makes us unhappy, but over time we learn to live with our new reality and our happiness tends to recover to a substantial extent. Yet this adaptability also has a downside: it makes us experts at taking things for granted.

Today, a large portion of humanity enjoys comforts and conveniences that even royalty did not possess in centuries past, but we do not wake up every day bursting with joy over the fact that we have central heating and are vaccinated against polio. When you first drive a new car home, you might derive genuine pleasure from the powerful yet quiet engine and the impeccable stitching on the upholstery. But a month or two later, you're likely to barely notice these details that at first seemed so important. This process, called hedonic adaptation, is one the main explanations for why happiness has improved so little when the objective conditions of our lives have improved so much. So what can we do about it?

Evidence suggests that the simple practice of noticing and writing down the good things in our lives can benefit our happiness. One study in which people wrote about intensely positive experiences for 20 minutes each day for three days found that people not only became happier, but may also have become healthier as well.⁸ Recording more ordinary positive experiences also appears to be beneficial. People who simply recorded three things that went well each day for a week, and why they happened, experienced increased levels of happiness for six months.⁹



2. Stay in the present – We humans have a remarkable ability to think about the non-present. As far as we know, squirrels never worry about what will happen next Tuesday nor ruminate on their sub-par nut-burying last Fall. In contrast, we can replay events from our pasts and learn from them (I got badly sunburned at the beach, so next time I'll wear sunscreen), predict the future and adjust our plans accordingly (if I wait until after rush hour, I can get to work in half the time), and even imagine purely hypothetical scenarios (how would life be different if people had tails?). This amazing capacity allows us to learn and plan and reason in ways that no other species can. But the very same ability that makes us so smart and capable also makes it possible to spend a lot of our lives in a state of worry, regret, or distraction. In fact, people spend nearly 50% of their time thinking about the non-present, or mind-wandering.²

What's more, people are substantially less happy when their minds wander than when they are present-focused, even when their minds are wandering away from unpleasant tasks or activities. Our goal shouldn't be to be present 100% of the time – some degree of mind-wandering is unavoidable and, in certain cases, extremely useful. But if we can use our capacity to mind-wander when it's worthwhile, and arrest our tendency to wander when it's causing pointless worry or harmful distraction, the evidence suggests we could be considerably happier.

3. Be kind to others – In addition to being adaptable and smart, humans are also highly social. Our capacity for cooperation is exquisite, witnessed, for example, in our densely populated cities in which people perform highly specialized jobs, receive currency that can be traded for almost any good or service imaginable, and where most people are able to get through the day without worrying about being attacked or exploited. If cooperation is the fuel for much of human progress, then our capacity to care about and help those around us (including people we aren't genetically related to) seems likely to be a catalyst.

Consistent with this idea, we seem to be designed to be kind. Happy people tend to be kind people, and part of the reason is the simple fact that being kind actually makes us happier. All around the world, people who are happier tend to be more engaged in more prosocial spending.¹⁰ In one experiment, people who were randomly assigned to spend a small amount of money on others experienced a significant increase in happiness while those who were assigned to spend money on themselves did not.¹¹ Another experiment investigated the link between kindness and happiness and found that happiness could be increased by merely noticing and counting one's own acts of kindness for one week. Moreover, this exercise led, in turn, to people becoming even kinder.¹²

“NONE OF US KNOWS HOW LONG WE WILL HAVE TO WALK THIS PLANET WE CALL HOME, BUT AS LONG AS WE ARE HERE WE CAN CHOOSE TO WALK WITH JOY.”

MATT KILLINGSWORTH PH.D.



4. Be Active – For many people the conveniences of modern life make it possible to accomplish a lot without expending much physical effort. Rather than spending our lives farming, hunting, gathering, or even working in a factory, more and more people today spend their lives sitting – in a car, at a desk, or on a sofa. As physical activity has become a recreational choice rather than a practical necessity, it's increasingly important for our well-being to make the decision to get up and move. A large and growing body of evidence supports the idea that physical activity isn't just good for our health – it makes us happier, too.¹³

In a cross-sectional study of over 15,334 people across 15 European Union countries, scientists found that people who engaged in physical activity were significantly more likely to be happy, even after controlling for age, health status, employment status, country, and more.¹⁴ We know from controlled experiments that at least part of the reason for this relationship is that physical activity actually makes people happier. For example, in one long-term experiment involving 124 people, half were randomly assigned to a weekly aerobic training program while the remaining half did not receive a formal exercise program. Those in the exercise condition exhibited substantially better well-being at the 4, 8, and 12 month follow-ups.¹⁵

These are just a few of the practical steps that seem to make people happier. There are, of course, many others – such as engaging in volunteer work, seeking out new friends, or spending less time commuting. But no matter how people do it, joy has the potential to facilitate progress. Enhanced well-being, greater resilience, stronger relationships and higher productivity – they are just some of the ways such progress can manifest.

Joy will come easy to some, harder to others. Some may pore over self-help books in search of insight while others will commit to a specific behaviour like walking in the park every lunchtime. Whatever way people seek out joy, one thought that could inspire them on their journey is that happiness does not need to be suppressed or deferred for the sake of ambition. It may well be the thing that helps make the ambition a reality.

This paper has focused on the benefits of happiness, but that is not to say that people should necessarily strive to be happy all the time.

First of all, it is no one's right to tell anyone else how to feel. At best, science can simply tell us what happiness is, how it affects us, and how to pursue it. What we do with this information is up to each of us.

Second, some unhappiness is inevitable. Life involves setbacks and disappointments and it is natural and often unavoidable that these events will affect how we feel. To expect permanent and unremitting happiness is to risk compounding our suffering by making us upset about being upset.

Finally, just as happiness can be beneficial, so too can negative emotions, under the right circumstances. If we are truly in danger, then fear will help motivate us to escape and mobilize our bodies to effectively fight or flee the threat. Other negative emotions, such as anger, disgust, sadness, and even jealousy and shame, also have their roles to play.

But when we look at the most common situations we face in the modern world, there is a case to be made that the things that happiness tends to promote – cooperation, engagement, creativity, and persistence (to name a few) – are the very things that are often most likely to help us succeed at work and in life.

A negative emotion like anger has its place, but it is unlikely to help with a crashing computer or slow traffic. Approaching challenges with equanimity, approaching people with compassion, and approaching life with enthusiasm is likely to be more effective and, ultimately, more fulfilling.

None of us knows how long we will have to walk this planet we call home, but as long as we are here we can choose to walk with joy.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper reviews and reflects on the science of happiness and its relationship to progress. Some of its key takeaways include:

- People often think that if they first focus on being successful, happiness will eventually follow.
- In fact, being successful appears to have only a modest relationship to happiness. How much money one makes, for instance, matters far less than people expect.
- While the objective conditions of life have improved dramatically over the past 50 years, levels of happiness have not increased in proportion and in some countries, including the U.S. and Great Britain, happiness has not increased at all.
- Because we have learnt to measure happiness, this subject is increasingly being taken seriously by organizations on a global scale.
- Happiness has historically been viewed as something to pursue for its own sake. However, scientific research has begun to reveal that happiness has effects of its own.
- A wide array of studies on happiness and success have found that happy people tend to outperform unhappy ones across a range of domains. For example, happier people tend to perform better at work, have stronger relationships, and be physically healthier.
- Why is this? Happiness appears to have specific effects on our thoughts and behavior, such as making us more sociable, creative, likable, resilient, and collaborative.
- There are actions individuals can take to be happier, including being more appreciative and grateful, staying focused on the present moment rather than becoming worried or distracted, being kind to the people around us, and more.
- The pursuit of happiness must be balanced against the fact that some degree of unhappiness may be inevitable, and that happiness is not ideal or appropriate in every situation. Nevertheless, the evidence seems to support the idea that happiness is beneficial much of the time.
- The broad range of benefits happiness offers gives people an additional reason to pursue happiness at work and in life.



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“PROGRESS HAS BEEN THE STORY OF OUR WHISKY SINCE OUR FOUNDER JOHN WALKER STARTED IT ALL NEARLY 200 YEARS AGO. WHAT TWO CENTURIES OF EXPERIENCE HAVE TAUGHT US IS THAT PROGRESS DOESN'T HAVE TO BE AN ENDLESS UPHILL JOURNEY -

WE CAN ENJOY THE STEPS WE TAKE AND THE MORE HAPPINESS WE FIND IN THEM THE MORE LIKELY WE ARE TO ACHIEVE OUR GOAL. EVIDENCE IS CONFIRMING A CONVICTION THAT SITS AT THE HEART OF OUR BRAND: JOY WILL TAKE YOU FURTHER.”

GUY ESCOLME
GLOBAL BRAND DIRECTOR, JOHNNIE WALKER



ENJOY JOHNNIE WALKER RESPONSIBLY

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