HAPPINESS IS A CHOICE!

According to Dr. Elia Gourgouris and Dr. Adrian Low, the difference between who you are and who you want to be, is what you do!

As Aristotle said, "Happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim . . . of human existence." One of the greatest achievements we can attain in life is leaving this world a better place than we found it. So, how can we make that a real accomplishment, and not just a hope? For one, we may need to re-think some of our attitudes about the sources of happiness. Taking a fresh look at what we believe, can open up a world of possibilities. Ultimately, happiness boils down to small course corrections made daily. They will lead us to becoming happier people.

There are many people who are knowledgeable and highly educated, yet who are quite unhappy in their lives. They know intellectually the steps to happiness, but knowledge without application is really just education. We can learn all the things that contribute to true, lasting happiness, like gratitude, forgiveness, love, and being of service, but if we don't apply them in our life on a daily basis, not much will change.

The good news is, we have quite a bit of control over whether we are happy or not! Although much of our natural disposition for happiness is based upon our genetic makeup, and therefore varies from person to person, it is merely an inherited tendency, not our destiny. Our destiny is, and always will be, what we work toward, what we accomplish in our lives.

Happiness expert Sonja Lyubomirsky, a professor of psychology at the University of California-Riverside, compared the genetically determined happiness "set point" to our inherited tendency to stay thin or to put on weight. She believes that "All the set point means is that in the same way some people have to work on maintaining their weight, [a person] may have to work to achieve the same level of happiness as someone else. It may be harder, but it can be done."

So if we're not as happy as we'd like to be - we can do something about it.

What Is Happiness, Anyway?

What does being happy feel like, and do we recognize happiness when we are experiencing it? Feeling happy can be defined as a sustainable sense of spiritual contentment that arises from deep within. It is a condition of the heart. It is not giddiness, silliness, or ecstasy. What many people don't realize, though, is that happiness is the result of many decisions made (whether consciously or unconsciously), to be happy.

There are many people who prefer to blame their unhappiness upon their circumstances, but if our happiness were dependent upon our circumstances, then most people would rarely be happy, because no one has a pain-free life. We all experience many challenges, hardships, adversity, and disappointments. It's a part of our human existence. Dr. Viktor Frankl, the bestselling author of Man's Search for Meaning and a renowned Austrian psychiatrist, survived the holocaust in Germany. While watching his fellow inmates in a Nazi concentration camp, he observed that all things could be taken from a man except the final freedom: the ability to choose how he will respond to any situation. He wrote that "between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom." And I would add our happiness.

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Is Happiness Worth the Effort?

Is happiness truly worth the effort? Absolutely! There are many reasons why life is more fulfilling when we're happy. Our happiness, or lack thereof, influences our daily interactions and all of our relationships with others. If we're happy, we are much more likely to positively impact our spouse, our children, our neighbors, friends, our co-workers, and our community. The world is a better place when the happiest version of each one of us is walking around.
Here are some additional reasons why the effort to become happier is worth it:

1. **Happiness is success:** Albert Schweitzer said that "Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success."
2. **Happiness is healthy:** Our physical health is directly impacted by our emotional and mental state. Happier people tend to be healthier in every aspect of life.
3. **Happiness is being connected:** If I smile, make a polite gesture, or say something welcoming, the majority of people will respond in kind.
4. **Happiness is attractive:** People are drawn to those who radiate happiness, warmth, and positivity.

Our happiness depends on the way we live our lives and how we view the world. We each create the lens through which we view the world. We can each change the lens and discover the true sources of happiness, by incorporating into our lives, the 7 paths to lasting happiness.

The 7 Paths to Lasting Happiness

The First Path: Love Yourself
The Second Path: Be Grateful
The Third Path: Extend Forgiveness
The Fourth Path: Follow Your Passion
The Fifth Path: Nourish Your Spirit
The Sixth Path: Create Loving Relationships
The Seventh Path: Serve From Your Heart

The difference between who you are and who you want to be, is what you do! If happiness is what you seek, then reading, pondering, and applying, the 7 paths to lasting happiness is a great way to start!

Dr. Elia Gourgouris, is an International Keynote speaker and a #1 Best-selling author of "7 Paths to Lasting Happiness". He was born and raised in Athens, Greece, and Santa Monica, CA. He later received his BA in psychology from UCLA, and then went on to receive his MA and PhD in psychology. He's the President of the Happiness Center (www.thehappiness-center.com) an organization which has helped thousands of people around the world achieve happiness and fulfillment in the professional and personal lives.

Dr. Adrian Low, translator of the #1 Amazon Bestselling book "7 Paths to Lasting Happiness" to the Chinese Version, is a chartered psychologist (BPS) that has graduated with a Doctor of Clinical, Industrial & Organizational Psychology from California Southern University in the USA. He also holds a Master's degree in Education from The Chinese University of Hong Kong.