



Happy Staff = Happy School

# Happiness is.....?!

## Working in schools can be stressful!

These articles are intended to help the great people who work in schools to reduce their stress and increase their sense of satisfaction from the important work they do. Your feedback is welcome!

## What we know?

Once we are over the level of poverty, money isn't directly linked with our level of happiness.

Comparing ourselves with others is NOT helpful

The biggest roadblock to happiness is the quest for status

**HAPPINESS FACTORS** - Good health, realistic goals, self-esteem, active pastimes, optimism, a sense of control, close relationships and challenging work

**Being happy doesn't mean everything is perfect. It means that you've decided to look beyond the imperfections.**

What does HAPPINESS mean to you? Would more money make you happier, more job satisfaction, more family time, a new car, more travel opportunities? *What would make you happier?*

Social and brain scientists have been able to ascertain the things that make us happy - but to get there we need to stop our quest for status and stop buying unnecessary possessions.

Scientists at the *University of Wisconsin* have used CT scans to identify the most active part of the brain during various moods. The most active part of the brain when we are distressed are the amygdala and the right front cortex. However when we are in a positive mood those areas of the brain are quiet and there is increased activity in the left prefrontal cortex. A person's mood range can be ascertained by noting the baseline level of activity in the right and left prefrontal areas. The further the ratio tilts to the left, the happier their mood.

Buddhist monks, who for centuries have been preaching the art of happiness were a great example. Their baseline point was the furthestest to the left.

A *Time* magazine poll found happiness tended to increase as income rose to \$50 000 per year but after that money didn't have a significant effect on happiness. They concluded that money ceases to have a significant effect on our happiness once an average level of income is attained.

Our tendency to compare our situation with that of others is NOT helpful. Many of us tend to compare ourselves with others then compete with them. This explains why happiness increases when a person escapes poverty but societies do not become happier as they become more affluent.

Connecting our happiness with our relative affluence leads us to the pursuit of more belongings and pointless pursuit. There will ALWAYS be someone with MORE than us! The biggest happiness roadblock is the quest for status - the desire to be liked by others for our attainment. Often this quest for status leads us to an unremitting quest to buy more stuff.

According to Professor Mirko Bagaric, author of "*Being Happy and Dealing With Moral Dimemmas*", the things that are conducive to happiness are good health, realistic goals, self-esteem, active pastimes, optimism, a sense of control, close relationships and challenging work.

The best way to obtain acceptance and recognition is not by conforming and aspiring to achieve what others seem to want. People respect those who have the courage and commitment to pursue their own goals and passions.

In summary, Bagaric advocates people need to indulge in more experiences and buy less stuff.

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Steve Francis is an expert in work-life satisfaction and is the author of three books, '*Time Management For Teachers*', '*A Gr8 Life...Live it now!*' and '*First Semester Can Make or Break You!*'. He was a Principal for 20 years. Steve lives in Brisbane with his wife and two school aged children.

