

# THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



## # 1546 Is the Key to Happiness Really So Simple?

Happiness is a highly personal issue. You ask this person and they'll give you one vision, while the next person sees it another way. Researchers have been studying happiness for a long time, trying to pinpoint the factors that positively impact the most people. I'm Jerry Roberts, and we'll dig into one project, nearly 100 years old, that is in pursuit of what makes people happy...and what it might mean for us in the workplace. That's next on The Extra Point.

What makes us happy? We ask the question, and that's with the assumption that we actually know what makes us happy. We may think we know, but do we really know?

Further, are we lining up for temporary happiness, or something more long-lasting?

For some it's money, status, power, and control. Without those things, there are folks who would be absolutely miserable.

I've heard that it's good health. Have you ever heard the line, "When you've got your health, you've got just about everything?"

If brought down by illness, how big a check would the wealthy and powerful write to regain their healthier days?

Still others derive their happiness from the relationships with family, friends, and — yes — coworkers. The people in their lives are the main focus. They wouldn't trade the people they care about for a big paycheck.

So, happiness is indeed individual. There's even a group that are seemingly only happy when they're miserable...and able to make the people around them equally miserable.

The Harvard Study of Adult Development has studied the same 700 people and their families over time to determine what makes people thrive. They asked thousands of qualitative questions as well as taking hundreds of quantitative health measurements from brain

scans to blood work. This project began in the 1930s and after decades of research, the results have been published in a new book, entitled *The Good Life*.

Nearly 100 years ago, participants were chosen from either Harvard's male students or a group of boys from a low-income suburb of Boston.

Every five years, participants gave medical information and every two years, they answered detailed questions. Their wives and children later joined the study, which has tracked this group through work, marriage, divorce and death.

Professor Robert Waldinger is the fourth director of the project and reflected upon what the study has shown, "We learnt that people believe happiness is something they can achieve — if they buy that house or get a promotion or lose enough weight, then happiness will follow."

The book reveals that money does not make people happy, nor does one's station or rank in life. Whatever happiness we get from those things is going to be short-term. Sure, we can enjoy them and we should, but to pin our hopes for lingering happiness on them is setting ourselves up for disappointment.

Waldinger continued: "We act as if it is a destination we will get to if we tick the right boxes, but the data very clearly shows that this is simply not true. And that's a good thing, as contentment is no longer something out of reach, but eminently achievable for all of us."

The Harvard study focuses on the relationships we develop, and this includes those we build at work. We spend about 30% of our week in the pursuit of earning a living, and we're in the presence of coworkers for 2,000 hours a year. This is generally equal to or often less time than we have with family.

Therefore, relationships at work matter.

(Con't.)

The most contented and balanced people have these relationships. Besides at work, it can be people who exercise together, social clubs, worship groups, civic organizations, and I'm sure you can add to the list.

One more thing that Harvard's study tells us: The people with the strongest social bonds and connections in their 50s, were in the best shape in their 80s.

If 50 is still a long ways away for you, don't wait to start cultivating relationships. Here's a tip, get to know people in all generations. You may have more in common with folks from your generation, but you'll connect with the others as well.

If you're in the Baby Boomer group, get out and meet new Gen Xers, Millennials, and Gen Z. Your best days don't have to all be in the rearview mirror.

Social connections, including relationships at work, are the building blocks for happiness. Do you need more of them?

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3FM, the Ray Gibson Show, and First Hawaiian Bank, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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