



# The Secret of Happiness

Karen Martin



There's been a lot of guff written about happiness in recent times. And I'm about to add to it in the New Year spirit of goodwill and new beginnings. On the one hand, you've got the positive thinking gurus peddling their often simplistic fast track to deep joy and on the other you've got the doom-mongers telling us we're richer, healthier and unhappier than we've ever been.

Despite being somewhat cynical about the way happiness is regarded as the panacea for all ills, I confess to being part of the industry which promotes it as a life-affirming goal. Some see happiness as sentimental dream or fleeting fantasy. But I realise through my work as a hypnotherapist and NLP practitioner that it is possible to create a happy state of mind and spread a little of this magical ingredient.

What makes you happy is only relevant to you. A loving partnership and strong friendships are more highly prized than material things by most of us. It's a given that happiness is not necessarily about millions in the bank, a yacht on the Med or any of those

affluent trappings. Many are the tales of how lottery winners lose their friends, community, identity and even their loved ones over arguments about new found loot.

There's no question, cash equals freedom of choice. More to the point, earning it equals a healthy sense of self worth which no trust fund kid will ever know (hence the less than life-enhancing addictions that often fill the gaps in their lives).

In a wealthy western culture, few of us go hungry or lack material goods. The poorest and most disadvantaged have access to housing, healthcare, education, the welfare state, iPods, mobiles and flat screen TVs.

What makes the starving happy is a good meal. It takes more than that to sate an emotionally starved but nutritionally nourished appetite. Whilst not life-threatening, such a condition undermines energy, motivation and focus, impairing the ability to set and achieve goals. High flyers in both primitive and technological societies often start out the hungriest and succeed simply because they try harder.

So it seems that the old fashioned Protestant principle of good old hard graft leads to a very secular kind of satisfaction. And being a bit peckish is no bad thing. It makes those little snacks in life so much more tasty. In this indulgent era of comfort and excess, those who make an effort and choose energy over inertia, those who curb their appetite enough to truly savour all that is plentiful and those who take the time to nurture their loved ones are the winners in the happiness stakes.

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