An enigma called happiness

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From the mundane to the metaphysical, it may mean different things to different people. But everyon happiness code... So, what's your story? -GEETA PADMANABHAN

This story is worth a retell. The king is ill and the medicine men don't know why. Someone suggests that the king wear dispatched to find a happy man. It is a long and arduous search, no one is willing to claim he is happy. The soldiers zo “Are you happy?” they ask. The man smiles and nods. “Will you give your shirt to the ailing king?” He replies, “But I d

Here is one chase in which we are united: the pursuit of happiness. Never mind it is intangible, impermanent and elus guys in the street have different interpretations of what it is. The American Declaration of Independence lists the purs an “unalienable right”, endowed by the Creator. Bhutan measures its wealth in terms of a per-capita happiness index.

You can’t buy happiness, but you can at least inherit it, said British and Australian researchers, after studying a thous twins. Their Eureka! on happiness is: Genes control half the personality traits that make people happy, while factors s responsible for the rest of our well-being.

A skill?

The researchers identified common genes in identical twins that result in certain personality traits and predispose pec
hardworking and conscientious people tend to be happier, the researchers reported in *Psychological Science*. “We have determined by genetics as well as our upbringing,” says Deepak Chopra, the digital age guru. Happiness is usually something riding a bike. Being happy is a skill anyone can acquire.

An army hospital in Arizona, US, is planning to introduce Hasya (laughter) Yoga to the veterans returning from Iraq. Weil, Director, Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine and an Indian-American doctor Gulshan Sethi. The medicos believe it has potential to treat Iraq war veterans suffering from post-traumatic syndrome. In faraway Estonia, Internet entrepreneur “Happiness Bank”. Here people can earn virtual money on their accounts by doing good deeds for those in need.

So what is this thing called happiness? Is it smelling roses (personal) or making affordable wheelchairs (public)? Does happiness come from what you earn. Above the “necessities” mark, wealth sinks into a comparison pool. You own a Blackberry and it is vaguely spiritual undertones, this theory became an instant classic. Money can't buy happiness. But now, Easterlin's pie?

Money does bring happiness, argue economists Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers. There may be no guarantees, but hit the world, public opinion surveys have shown “income does matter”. They cite Gallup polls to confirm that life satisfaction.

But, affluence by itself doesn’t guarantee a sense of well-being. Those syringe-and-scalpel-induced smiles on page three are not from what you earn. Above the “necessities” mark, wealth sinks into a comparison pool. You own a Blackberry and it is... Money can't buy happiness. But now, Easterlin’s pie?

“Happiness is not a permanent state of being,” says a young mom, looking at her sleeping kid. “We can’t say, now that we have are happy moments. We are not primed to feel continuous satisfaction.” Happiness is also connected to the time happy as a teen (aargh!) will look completely silly at thirty. Should we link our happiness to planning for a future? Ok, happiness comes from within. You tap the source of happiness and use it to still the demons within. Happiness is entertaining your whims. Lasting enjoyment comes from living life with zest, pursuing your career, love, friendship or choice. You can choose to brood and be angry or find the brighter side and be happy with what you have. To reach that more than enough relationships, more than enough physical, emotional and mental resources. You are at peace with your body (action) and spirit (conscience) vibrate in unison.

Remember Randy Pausch? At 46, (wife and three pre-school kids) he learned he was terminally ill with pancreatic cancer. On the Internet by more than 10 million people, he had a few months to live. Randy decided not to be bitter or angry. He lived each moment as a gift.

Whatever you do, see that your happiness does not come from hurting others. When worries lash, say, “even this will pass.” Recognise that bubble in you that swells when you’re sharing a laugh with a kid. Then you will be the one we:

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