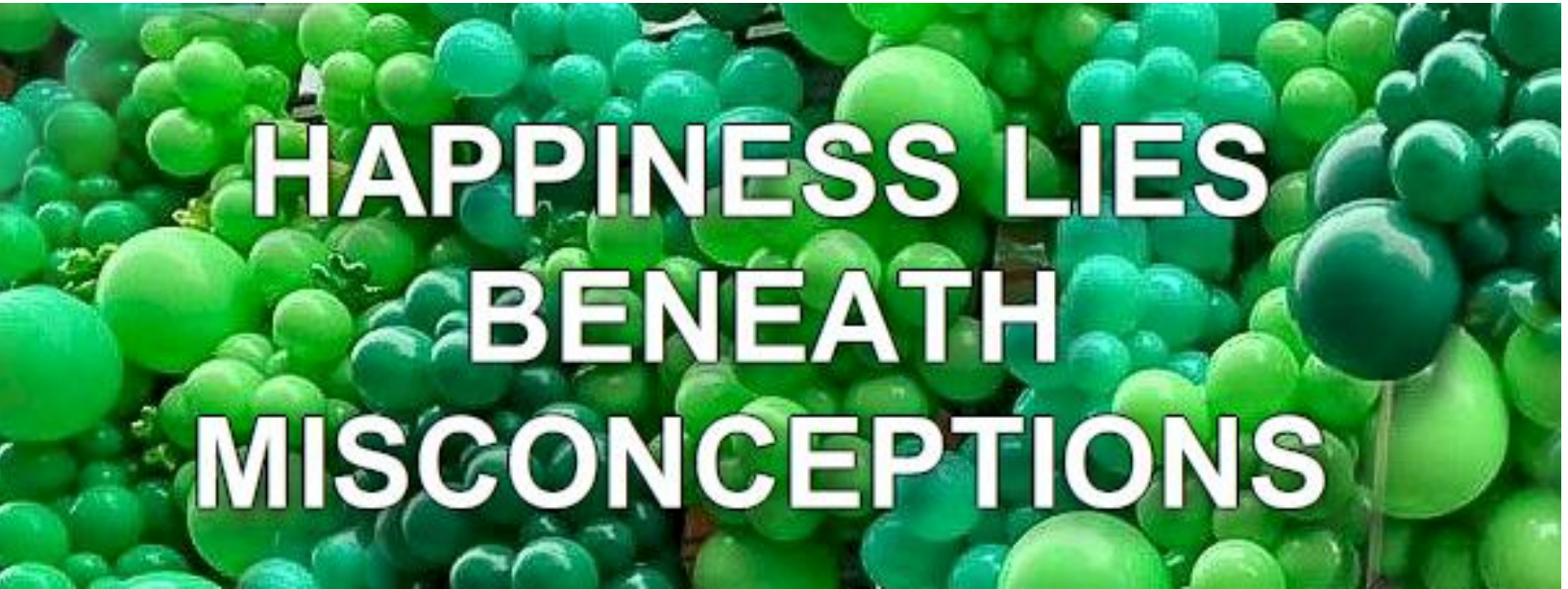


## THRIVING TOWARD HAPPINESS

What is best in life? Is it a quantity of pleasures and freedom from pain? Your morning brew, eating chocolate, a back rub, watching the sun set, listening to music, or the scent of freshly baked pie? These are sensory pleasures that can be quantified as significantly better than stubbing your toe, having a migraine headache, breaking your arm, or being hungry. However enjoyable sensory pleasures are, they are short-lived and transitory. They involve little if any thinking.

Is the best in life something loftier – the pursuit of wealth, power, status, and beauty? People put significant effort into these goals and measure them, but are they the most gratifying?

When we ask about the best in life we prefer to speak about how you thrive as a human being. What is best for your mental and physical health? What underpins your well-being and what makes you happy?

A graphic with the text "HAPPINESS LIES BENEATH MISCONCEPTIONS" in large, bold, white capital letters. The background is a dense field of green grapes, with a single lollipop on the right side.

# HAPPINESS LIES BENEATH MISCONCEPTIONS

For obvious reasons people have been studying happiness and life satisfaction for centuries. The research reveals that we ultimately have a hold over the things that impact our peace of mind, and there are specific ways of thinking and acting that can strongly impact our sense of satisfaction. Studies indicate the things that underpin our mental and physical well-being are what makes us flourish as human beings and these are also key to contentment and happiness. concept

Yet for many of us happiness seems elusive. Why?

Let's start by ridding ourselves of the misleading notions surrounding happiness. On the next few pages, we identify 21 things that can negatively affect your well-being. As you read each one, think about where you place your emphasis.

**1) Happiness seems elusive, because it is not just one thing that results in us being happy for the rest of our lives.**

Happiness is multidimensional and materializes through several facets of life unfolding over a lifetime. They do not always fit together at the same time. Take your career or a marriage as examples. They unfold over time and require sacrifice of other spur of the moment pleasures. You can put your energy into building a stellar career and accept that you will have fewer lazy days on the beach with friends. You may have to make choices and accept that as one aspect of your life increases in happiness another may not. One aspect of life that produces happiness may be your pursuit of learning or the meaningful things you do for others. Still another aspect might be how secure you feel in life, or how in control you feel. Your happiness may simply be the absence of aversive emotions or physical and psychological barriers to your well-being: stress, exhaustion, illness, injury, doubt, worry, or hyper-vigilance, fear, anger, frustration, despair, stress, exhaustion, illness, and injury. You might derive the most satisfaction from your connection to your family and friends.

**2) Happiness seems elusive because we tend to think about happiness in the future or past tense.**

Do you recall the days when you thought about how happy you would be to finally have your own apartment, get the attention of that special person, go to university, buy your dream car, land that promotion, or make more money? You were impatient for that happiness. Now you have fuzzy memories about how long you were happy before you realized you were not in perpetual bliss and started to chase the next bright thing.

Think about your last school reunion, when everyone sat around saying, “Remember when! Wasn’t that fun! “ Fond memories of the past reassure us that happiness exists, but also reminds us that moments of pleasure that produce just one aspect of happiness do not linger for extended periods of time. No matter how much of your dreams you achieve, after a happiness fix, it is normal for you to experience restlessness with the present and to imagine seeking a new happiness in the future that would most certainly make you happy. That is normal and it is good. Discontent keeps you motivated. However, you should not be so busy trying to find happiness that you forget to savour it when it does arrive.

**3) Happiness seems elusive because we ignore our own needs.**

Trying to please everybody is not only an impossible mission, while you are trying to take care of everybody else’s needs, who is taking care of yours? No one! That is because nobody knows better than you what you really want and need. If you don’t think about yourself and what you can do to nourish your own well-being toward happiness, nobody else will. Being a little selfish is not always bad. Be nice to yourself; do things that nourish your well-being. As you thrive and feel fulfillment, people around you will also feel better.

**4) Happiness seems elusive because we seldom place emphasis on today’s happiness, the good things or feelings, that are “here right now”.**

Even when we are surrounded by brief moments of pleasure or true happiness, we fail to notice and appreciate them. Like other animals, we are wired with the ability to notice the threatening, scary things in life. You know, the fight or flight response. Sometimes we expose ourselves to too much tragedy and forget to open our eyes to see the small beautiful details of everyday life experiences. Yet, for our well-being we need those positive emotions imprinted on our minds. Seldom do you hear anyone say out loud, "Isn't this great, right now?" "I'm happy to be alive!" Too often, at the end of the day or the week we know that time has passed, but we have little notion where most of it went, which is sad indeed, because this represents pieces of our precious life that went missing without record or recognition.

Do you let the good moments slip away because you let the tragedy in the news rule your day? Because you are preoccupied by inconsequential things in social media? Do you have a morning coffee with a spouse and spend time thinking about all the things you have to do?

Moments of joy in the simplest of things tell you life is beautiful, you are alive and have this day.

- Waking up in the morning
- Nature
- The face of someone you love
- Music that lifts your soul
- Kindness
- Visiting an old friend
- Using your mind/voice to stand up for what you believe in
- Loving a person, job, music, animal, sport, book, hobby
- Having something purposeful to do
- Helping your neighbour
- The smiles of your loved ones at play
- Exercise

Take a moment to focus on what is around you and what you do each day and week. Some things are more important to your well-being than others. Ask yourself why, and how you can have more of it. Then make sure you choose at least one of the important ones each day to feed your happiness. These simple meaningful moments accumulate – a multitude of them can be impactful. Savour the experiences, share them, take mental photographs. Hoard them all for nourishment.

## **5) Happiness seems elusive because we compare our lives to that of others.**

We envy them their perfect lives, not recognizing that with social media and photo-shopped lives they may not be happy at all. Social media has made everyone accessible for comparison, and never in the history of our species has envy been so out of control. We used to envy a neighbour. Now we get to envy everyone in the world. Yet, what we envy, most of us can do without. We can never truly know another person's happiness, day to day lives, their past, their pain. We see material possessions or a smiling face on a selfie and can easily be drawn in to assume that another person is happy.

You probably recognize that envy is not particularly pleasant and it is not particularly realistic. You can intellectualize any jealousy, but when you stare at a computer screen or complain about how some people have it all, on an emotional level you risk putting so much energy into envy that you miss seeing

what you already have that is more meaningful or significant than what you envy. You are unique, as we all are, so there is no point in comparing yourself to other people. Have faith in your own life journey and work toward achieving your goals. Praise yourself for your achievements, small and large. Think about how far you've come, and focus on your life and how to make it better.

**6) Happiness seems elusive because we do not know how to answer the question:** "What would be good enough?"

Happiness does not depend on a perfect environment or historic earth-shattering circumstances. How many times have you postponed your dream because it was not the perfect time? How many times have you missed the great moments in your life because your expectations were too fussy, demanding, naïve, or simply too high or impractical? Experiences that feed our happiness may be more plainly wrapped. There may be momentous moments that we let slip away because it did not fit our expectations or our notion of perfect.

**7) Happiness seems elusive because we mistake pleasure or popularity for happiness; we mistake fun or a momentary thrill for happiness. We mistake a luxurious life for happiness.**

We end up aiming for immediate pleasure and minimal pain which is short-term, shallow, and impacts no one else.

**8) Happiness seems elusive because we look in the wrong direction; we look outward, not inward.**

We think it is conditioned in external things. We look for happiness in the wrong things and the wrong people. North American culture pushes people to pursue happiness by selling their blueprint for wealth, power, status, consumption, beauty, and glamour. This one simple question, "Do you want to be happy?" is often answered like this: "I want, but..." The answer is conditioned on something the person needs to have or do to be happy. Sadly, too many people do not know that unconditional happiness even exists because they do not know of any other way to live life except through wanting external things.



There is nothing wrong with a beautifully furnished home, the latest gadget, or awesome week-end retreats. The fun or pleasant things do provide a level of contentment, but pleasure fades quickly. You can end up in an endless marathon to fill your life with fun or pleasant things. If you end up shackled to those conditions or lofty goals you may face situations that are out of your control and beyond your capabilities, and you will never know that unconditional happiness exists. Happiness is not found in any blueprint, bank balance, business card title, or mirror. Happiness is not found in fifteen minutes of fame. It has been estimated that our wealth, health, and life circumstances account for only a small percentage (15% to 20%) of life satisfaction.

Clearly the main ingredient in happiness lies in something more meaningful beyond external factors. When you aim for gratification in everything outside of you, you'll always be chasing, because

## Happiness is Inside You.

### 9) Happiness seems elusive because it cannot be specifically quantified.

We tend to measure many things in life for instant feedback. But, life doesn't work like a video game where you accumulate points for every pleasurable moment (cup cake + 125 points, delightful dinner + 400 points, lost 3 kilos + 820 points, noisy neighbour moved + 1300 points, reading a good book + 11455 points) and deduct points for disappointment, pain, or judgement errors (missed deadline – 860 points, paper cut – 88 points, concert cancelled – 4680 points, my job sucks – 15433 points). How can you precisely measure relationships, emotions, or the meaning of life? In life you cannot count gold coins or capture five fictional islands to tally up point totals that equate it to happiness.



### 10) Happiness seems elusive because we live under the misconception that happiness is about smiling and being cheerful all the time.

You cannot don a super hero costume and role-play your way to happiness, faking it till you make it. Happiness is not on the surface in a permanent state of laughter or pleasure. We fail to understand that it may not be possible to have total happiness in all areas of our life at all times. There is silence in between, and maybe sorrow too. You can be happy and still be comfortable with appropriate moments of fear, sadness and anger.

### 11) Happiness seems elusive because we pursue another person's idea, description or criterion for happiness.

Sometimes we compare ourselves to others or we may even put our happiness in the hands of another person. Happiness cannot be replicated. There is no blueprint or strict rules. Happiness certainly has no judge. While your friends and family can be a part of your "happiness team", no other person can do it for you. No one can fill the void or make decisions for you. No one can decide whether your criterion for happiness is worthwhile or not. In fact, your own inner voice is hard enough on you without having to satisfy someone else's standards for happiness. Let your friends live their existence with their meaning of happiness while you live yours being happy with who you are. It is something you live with, so forget what other people expect, and create your own goals.

You may have to make time (days to be entirely on your own, just you and your thoughts) to figure out what you need to fuel your well-being and create your own happiness by doing what feels right to you. If you are single, use the time to rediscover yourself and what you really want from a relationship. If you have a dream, you can determine what steps you need to take to achieve your goals. If you want to make changes in your life, you need determine what behaviours you want to work on improving.

Don't compare yourself to others. Don't worry about what other people are doing – just focus on what's right for you. Happiness is about learning to trust yourself, trust in your ideas, your thoughts and those feelings that show up pushing you forward in your pursuits.

**12) Happiness seems elusive if we try to control every aspect of our lives and try to rely on always getting what we want to be happy.**

Life is unpredictable and it is impossible to control everything. There are times we need to go with the flow and look forward to the unknown. Life would be so boring if everything was planned in advance. Satisfaction derived from learning to live with any outcome is much more stable in that it is applicable to every outcome and not only those where we obtain what you want.

**13) Happiness seems elusive because we yield to our fear.**

Fear limits or stops us from experiencing many things that are extremely good for our well-being. People are afraid of being alone, so they remain in miserable relationships. People fear conflict or what others will think, so they refrain from asking questions, voicing opinions, or suggesting great ideas. People fear letting their team down or tarnishing their reputation. They fear being labeled, being wrong or looking dumb? People fear being underappreciated, or someone else taking credit for their ideas. People fear having brave conversations when they witness injustice or someone hurting. We all have fears. Shying away from fear does not make it go away. You can choose to eyeball your fear and act in spite of fear, or become a prisoner to fear.

You have no fears, you say? Do you recall ever using the words “impossible” or “hopeless” or “awkward”. Let's look at four instances of fear that many people do not consider as such. The first is fear of appearing selfish. How many times have you decided to sacrifice your needs because you did not want to appear selfish, fearing how others might perceive you? The second one is fear of being decisive.

How about number three: “saying no”. Ask yourself, when was the last time you said “no” to people when you did not want to do something they asked of you. Was it fear of not being liked or of offending the other person? How often do you do things you do not want to do? The fourth is “fear of not being perfect. How many times in your life did you avoid participating in an activity because you might feel embarrassed, vulnerable, or look awkward? How often do you want to appear perfect? You can waste valuable time and energy and drive yourself crazy aiming for that kind of perfect.

**14) Happiness seems elusive if we believe that well-being and happiness are pre-determined by genes or personality.**

We are not swept along on a hereditary treadmill. Research has proven that happiness is actually a skill that can be learned and that your happiness levels can change substantially over your lifetime.

**15) Happiness seems elusive because we tend to be in constant competition and fail to promote the better side of our humanity.**

One side of our nature is self-interested. This is our in-built instinct to do whatever we can to survive and thrive. We often do this at the expense of others. The other side of our humanity is co-operative and leads us to help others even when there is no direct benefit for ourselves. We are wired to care about each other. However, our culture encourages the opposite – competition with the relentless idea that success is about doing better than others. In schools, it's exams. In the workplace we compete for performance bonuses. We are inundated with conspicuous displays of consumption and rivalry. We have such a strong cultural narrative about the selfish side of humanity that we adopt competitive systems and behaviours that lead to envy and resentment that undermines our natural co-operative tendencies. We fail to develop social and emotional skills that enhance our well-being, which has an immense impact on us as individuals, on society, and our happiness.

**16) Happiness seems elusive because we fail to distinguish between the fun things we do, that please us or satisfy our hunger or thirst, and the meaningful or enjoyable things we do that are intellectually stimulating, consequential, creative, and gratifying.**

We muddle the two together, and think we can get them the same way. Sadly, we tend to use the same verb "like" to characterize our preference for nearly all the best things in life. How can we lump a backrub or eating an ice cream cone in summer into the same category as mastering a skill or climbing a mountain? They are not the same. We pursue them and enjoy them differently.

The fun things are not only different from the consequential and gratifying things; the experiences activate different parts of brains! We share momentary pleasures, those of mere sensation, with other classes of animals. However, the contentment we derive from pleasures of the intellect, of feelings and imagination, of moral sentiments, monumental experiences, or having a nurturing connection to another person are classified as distinctly human, and they provide us long-term gratification.

**17) Happiness seems elusive because we do not give meaning to the individual aspects of our overall well-being that lead to happiness.**

When something fills us with joy or pride it is different than being surprised, hopeful or inspired. Yet, we tend to "like" them all or attach the experience to common words like "fun" or "feel good". We should attach more meaning to our experiences, broaden our awareness to more closely identify with the positive emotions we feel, and then choose words that fit that emotion. Let's ditch the boring

words “like” and “fun”. The words exhilarating, mesmerizing, alive, overjoyed, fulfilled, thrilling, compelling, comical can lift our mood and refocus our attention. You get the point. We’ve compiled a list of more than 500 words just for you. By simply contemplating each word on the positive emotions list, you can think more positively, which will influence your perspectives and amp up your happiness.

[Check out this list of 558 positive words](#)

#### **18) Happiness seems elusive because it is not a mood or an assessment of the conditions of life.**

True happiness is wrapped up in how we thrive through our state of mind and overall well-being, which includes our emotions, relationships, engagement, accomplishments, and purpose. A state of tranquility will never just fall in our laps – it’s too chaotic a world. We have to carve out space within ourselves to experience it as a feeling, and commit to it as a daily experience, regardless of what’s around us.

#### **19) Happiness seems elusive, because we do not work for it.**

We take it for granted or we feel entitled. We do not like to work for things that we think we deserve. We may all deserve happiness, but it is not automatic. Happiness is not a physical thing that people can hand over like an inheritance. There is no “right of passage” ceremony. Happiness is not found in the things we acquire. We cannot demand it. And it certainly isn’t found in a quick fix, fast read, cursory study, or one event or activity. Happiness does not fall into your lap as you wish for it. We are responsible to create our own happiness, which means we have to work for it.

We find it easy to put significant effort into lofty goals and sensory pleasures, but in aiming for true happiness, we get lazy. As a society we are depressed and starving to death spiritually, but do not put in the work required to generate positive emotions and experiences for ourselves.

What we fail to realize is that happiness itself is actually not a goal it is a by-product of living a meaningful life. For many people it is easier to sink into misery or seek out a quick-fix recreational diversion (some very harmful and addictive. We have to carve out space and time in our lives to expand our lives in meaningful ways. A meaningful life is such an important aspect of happiness that we will explore this subject further.

#### **20) Happiness seems elusive because we refrain from asking curious questions.**

Why? Because we fear we’ll be judged incompetent, indecisive, or unintelligent. Young children, who have an insatiable need to understand the world around them, are not afraid to ask questions, and they don’t worry about whether others believe they should already know the answers. But, as we get older self-consciousness creeps in. As they climb the organizational ladder, many people think they have to demonstrate expertise and provide answers, not ask questions. How many of us think we have less to learn? Such fears and beliefs are misplaced. Research indicates that high and consistent levels of curiosity are linked to positive emotions and happiness. People like us more and view us as more competent, and the heightened trust makes our relationships more interesting and intimate.

## 21) Happiness seems elusive because we cannot pinpoint a description of meaningful happiness.

No one can pinpoint a description of meaningful happiness, even though happiness has been studied for centuries. Lacking a clear definition undermines our ability to sufficiently understand happiness or proactively adopt and efficiently cultivate it. We have become too accustomed to quick easy answers – the facts and trivia – and think we can simply go on to the next question. Today as a society we ignore the most important aspect of a question – the part where we stop and think. What mankind has figured out over the centuries is that the meaningful and consequential things in life are impossible to depict in images or words – bookshelves and gallery walls abound with mankind’s attempt, though.

### WHAT IS BEST IN LIFE?

Now that you understand why happiness may seem so elusive, you can begin to adopt opposite beliefs and behaviors that will more positively influence your well-being and happiness.

There is a lot of research to point you in the right direction. Our goal in the long-form resource entitled “Amp Up Your Happiness” is to share what we have learned so that you may thrive toward real happiness.

So we are back to our initial question: What is best in life? What is meaningful in your life that will help you thrive? What is best for your overall well-being, mentally and physically?

- Someone who supports your dreams?
- Humor and laughter?
- Having a positive attitude?
- Brave conversations?
- Feeding the homeless?
- Saving wildlife?
- A family you can always count on?
- Being the person your family and community can count on?
- Willing to risk your life in the service of some higher value or goal?
- Being your best self?

What is best in life is deeply personal. What works for another person may not work for you. Only you can distinguish between your higher gratifying experiences and lower pleasures to determine where your own appreciation and contentment lie, what produces the great amount of long-term good feeling, what makes you flourish as a person, and what gives meaning to your life. What is best in life for you is elemental to your well-being. When you can distinguish what is best in life for you, you are on the verge of describing how happiness feels for you and you will also know how to enhance your happiness.

## Inspired and Committed, We Celebrate Your Journey

At Corro, we believe in the power of people. We are inspired to expand humanity's capacity for wisdom, compassion, and courage.

In our commitment to helping you achieve long-term personal development and use your organizational platform for positive impact, we celebrate the journey of lifelong learning while fostering an all-inclusive community driven environment of meaning, personal connection, and fun.

**Corro is not just a Work Space – Our Aim is Helping the Community Thrive through People Success**